

**The role of Work-Life Balance in Tech Companies in Dublin
and how to improve corporate performance
as well as the wellbeing of employees**

Research dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of

MSc in International Business Management
Griffith College Dublin – Graduate Business School

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August 2020

Candidate Declaration

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I certify that the dissertation entitled:

The role of Work-Life Balance in Tech Companies in Dublin and how to improve corporate performance as well as the wellbeing of employees

Submitted for the degree of: **MSc in International Business Management** is the result of my own work and that where references is made to the work of others, due acknowledgment is given.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Karl-Heinz and Chien-Yi, who were my source of energy, who always believed in me and always supported me morally, emotionally as well as financially.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity - I am infinitely grateful.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Garrett Ryan, for his support, help, advice, and guidance throughout the entire process of writing this dissertation.

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Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends for all their support and encouragement - Thank you.

Abstract

Over the last decade, the changing geographical and temporal boundaries between work and private life became a characteristic of Ireland's evolution into a "new, stronger economy" (James, 2011). Without a doubt, this major change has resulted in several factors shaping today's Irish working environment, such as the globalization of competition, demographic changes, including an increasing number of women in the workplace, changes in work patterns and requirements, as well as the fast development in technological innovations lead to more connectivity and accessibility around the clock (Darcy et al., 2012; Leonardi et al., 2013; Poelmans et al., 2008).

The world of business is changing rapidly and unpredictably, making it increasingly difficult to maintain a balance between work and private life (Skorska, 2019).

Based on this fact, the present dissertation aims to analyse the term Work-Life Balance in more detail, to examine its meaning and its impact on Tech Companies in Dublin, and to find ways to improve corporate performance and employee wellbeing by also understanding their motivational factors.

The theoretical background of the study includes a thorough literature review in understanding the term Work-Life Balance and its outcomes, the changing world of work, generational differences, Work-Life Balance programs, employee motivation and the impact of the Corona Pandemic on day-to-day work life.

Therefore, this explorative study aims to examine the lived experience of Irish tech employees in terms of Work-Life Balance and their perception as well as the problems they have faced so far.

Based on a review of the literature on Work-Life Balance, semi-structured interviews were conducted, which comprise the empirical data of this study.

The analysis of the qualitative data showed that most Tech Companies offer WLB policies/benefits and place a lot of emphasis on corporate culture, which is highly appreciated by the employees. Nevertheless, the data collected showed that WLB policies/benefits alone are not sufficient to improve the wellbeing of employees, and that companies' policies should be better analysed and adapted to the needs of their employees. On this basis, it is recommended that companies could, for example, conduct regular surveys on the Work-Life Balance experience of their employees and find out what their recommendations and wishes are to make improvements to the WLB concept. Ultimately, further research is needed to improve the Work-Life Balance experience of Tech employees in the long-term.

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List of Abbreviations

etc.	Et cetera
WLB	Work-Life Balance
e.g.	For example (exempli gratia)
i.e.	in other words (id est)

Chapter 1

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

The Irish economy experienced remarkable national economic growth in the 1990s due to the so-called "Celtic Tiger" (James, 2011). This significant change has undoubtedly led to a number of factors influencing the Irish working environment today, such as the globalisation of competition, demographic changes including the growing number of women in the workplace, changes in working patterns and requirements as well as the rapid development of technological innovation like social media, leading to greater connectivity and accessibility 24/7 (Darcy *et al.*, 2012; Leonardi *et al.*, 2013; Poelmans *et al.*, 2008). The business world is becoming unforeseeable and fast-changing and it is getting more and more difficult to maintain a balance between work and private life (Skorska, 2019).

Nowadays, an increasing number of employees attach greater importance to flexibility and freedom at the workplace (Sánchez-Hernández *et al.*, 2019).

For this reason, businesses have to figure out how it might be possible to help a diverse group of employees to achieve a healthy balance between work and private life fairly and visibly while maintaining or raising the effectiveness of their organization (Darcy *et al.*, 2012; Sánchez-Hernández *et al.*, 2019).

In theoretical definitions people describe Work-Life-Balance as a search for a healthy balance between work and private life and the feeling to be well and satisfied in both aspects (Johari *et al.*, 2018). Some people define Work-Life Balance as a key factor that can positively influence significant issues in the workplace such as employee fluctuation, stress, diseases, job satisfaction and corporate performance (McCarthy *et al.*, 2010; Giaque *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, the issue of Work-Life Balance is not a new "fad", but a natural consequence of the before mentioned drastic as well as irreversible transformations that are taking place (Poelmans *et al.*, 2008).

These definitions of Work-Life Balance are closely aligned with the view of the author of this study.

This research will examine the relationship between Work-Life Balance, the impact on employee wellbeing and company performance as well as ways in which these could be improved.

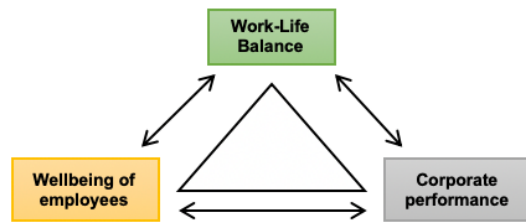


Figure 1: Correlation of Work-Life Balance, wellbeing of employees, corporate performance (own illustration)

1.2 Research Purpose

During the past decade, the changing geographical and temporal boundaries between work, home, and family had become a feature of Ireland's transformation to a "new stronger economy". Subsequently, a reorganisation of work in companies has been undertaken in response to globalisation and new technologies. The new technologies offer businesses the possibility of "flexibility" which for many workers leads to a higher workload, less predictable as well as unsocial working hours, since companies require them for longer and harder working hours to reduce labour costs. Furthermore, employees feel a sense of technology overload, as they are available on different devices or networks, which could lead to stress and reduced job satisfaction (James, 2011; Yin *et al.*, 2018). For these reasons, there is a growing desire among government, businesses, and employees for a healthy Work-Life Balance as a measure to improve the quality of life (James, 2011).

Based on the fact that the issue of Work-Life Balance is not "new" there is already some existing research in general. Some studies that have already addressed the topic of Work-Life Balance and have pointed out issues such as the importance of social factors like time for family, friends, hobbies, but also a fair salary, good working conditions, promotion opportunities and training for employees or psychological support etc. within a company for a healthy balance between work and private life (Feeney and Stritch, 2019). Furthermore, most research also examines the result of a lack of Work-Life Balance and the impact on employees.

Nevertheless, the research to date is incomplete because individual aspects and feelings of employees are not considered and everything is kept very general. Additionally, there is no specific analysis for Tech Companies in Dublin in particular, which is why the researcher based her investigation on this gap. The tech industry is a knowledge-intensive sector that is at the forefront of new working practices and for this reason, there is fierce competition between the various Tech Companies that try to launch new products the fastest on the market and operate 24/7. This leads to the consequence that it is difficult to separate work and "life" in this industry compared to more traditional professions (James, 2011). Furthermore, it is particularly important for technology professionals to have a good Work-Life Balance, as otherwise it will lead to negative effects such as more fluctuation, decreased performance, loyalty to the organisation as well as on their overall wellbeing and satisfaction (Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2016). According to studies 49% of workers in the tech sector feel burned out because of their work conditions (Montanez, 2018).

Nonetheless, it should not be forgotten that Work-Life Balance also brings a "dark side" with it, which can scarcely be found in the literature. For example, meta-analytical studies indicate that working from home does not automatically lead to a substantial reduction in work. It is also argued that working from home can easily lead to conflicts within the family and thus, again, may negatively affect mental health (Perrigino *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, when it comes to Work-Life Balance programs, companies need to consider that they incur costs to the organization, as they want to ensure the best possible offer for their employees, and still employees leave companies and the hiring, as well as training of new employees, results in much higher costs (Rodríguez-Sánchez *et al.*, 2020). This raises the question of whether these Work-Life programs are really worthwhile for companies in the end.

Therefore, the purpose of this dissertation is to analyse the term Work-Life Balance in more detail, to examine its significance and impact on Tech Companies in Dublin and to find ways to improve the wellbeing of employees and corporate performance. The concrete research question, related to the objectives is shown in chapter 1.4.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Work is a dimension in our lives and should not interfere with our private lives. At the same time, work is also a means of earning a living. In recent years, the relationship between work and private life has received great attention in public debates (Kelliher *et al.*, 2019). Most studies indicate that the concept of Work-Life Balance is becoming increasingly important today as it helps to maintain a balanced life in both the workplace and at home (Muthukumar *et al.*, 2014). In addition, more and more organizations are seeing Work-Life Balance as a new strategic human resources policy and an important issue to ensure a healthy working environment (Sánchez-Hernández *et al.*, 2019).

These statements will be analysed in more detail during the study to determine whether Work-Life Balance is as good as most people predict.

As mentioned before workers are nowadays available 24/7 and it is becoming increasingly difficult to spend valuable time with family, friends, or colleagues (Anttila and Oinas, 2018). Moreover, competition and customer pressure are rising steadily which leads to the fact that companies have to rationalize and restructure, meaning that fewer people have to work more. As a result of all this, additional requirements, as well as expectations, are placed on employees and companies put them under permanent pressure to achieve the set goals (Poelmans *et al.*, 2008). These organisational, as well as work-related transformations, are also linked to demographic changes, including the growing number of women in the workplace, dual-career families, one-parent families, and the increasingly ageing population (Kennedy, 2018; Poelmans *et al.*, 2008).

A good example is the strong integration of women into the workforce on the one hand and the ageing of the population on the other. Men and women of the so-called "sandwich generation" are progressively squeezed between work and care tasks for children and elderly parents (Poelmans *et al.*, 2008). Consequently, a more diverse workforce is emerging, consisting of different generations and thus having differing personal and work-related needs which are in general complex. Organizations that want to create a healthy and happy working environment for the balance between work and private life are today confronted with a challenging issue (Hima Bindu, 2017).

According to studies, a lack of a balanced work and life situation can lead to stress and dissatisfaction in the workplace and consequently leads to higher absenteeism, reduced productivity, anxiety as well as diseases such as burnout or depressions which is a reaction to unsatisfactory working conditions (Vasantha and Reddy, 2017; Hsu *et al.*, 2019). A good example of bad working conditions as well as a lack of a Healthy Work-Life Balance is the company Amazon. According to the Guardian the company was accused of treating its employees like robots. Indeed, it was discovered that in the past three years, 600 ambulances were called to the warehouses of Amazon in the UK. This happened because Amazon ignored the health complaints of its employees and continued to put them under pressure to achieve the expected targets in order to continue to generate profit (Butler, 2018).

These issues underline the possible need for Work-Life Balance in companies to successfully meet today's challenging conditions and to maintain long-term business success as well as satisfied employees.

Despite the positive aspects of the Work-Life Balance mentioned before, the possible negative effects should also be examined more closely. The research of previous Work-Life Balance studies has a limited vision, as Work-Life Balance policies focus mainly on working parents and their needs (Kelliher *et al.*, 2019).

The latest developments in work and employment relationships, such as short-term, part-time or zero-hour contracts, as well as hobbies, caring for the elderly or pets, have so far not really been taken into account in companies' work-life policies (Kelliher *et al.*, 2019).

1.4 Research Objectives

This exploratory study attempts to analyse the concept of Work-Life Balance in more detail, what effects it has on employees and companies. As previously stated, the aim of this dissertation is to determine how a balance between work and private life can be developed or improved in order to achieve positive outcomes for the employees as well as the company.

In the following the research objectives and the research question are presented:

Research Objectives	Research Question
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To explore, to what extent Work-Life Balance exists and conducted by Irish Tech Companies (e.g. Work-Life Balance programs, etc.) and the outcomes of implementation• To examine the extent to which employees have so far been able to reconcile a balanced private life with their work, what problems/consequences they have faced and what long-term effects this will have on employees.• To investigate the correlation between Work-Life Balance, employee wellbeing and corporate performance and how it could be improved or further developed	What is the lived experience of Irish Tech workers with managing their Work-Life Balance?

Table 1: Research Objectives and Research Questions (own illustration)

1.5 Structure of the study

The dissertation is divided into five chapters, which respectively contribute to both the research objective and the investigation of the statements made in previous chapters. Beginning with the first chapter that provides a brief introduction to the topic to be researched. It also states the research objective of this exploratory study, explains its purpose, emphasizes its importance for Work-Life Balance, and describes the methodology used.

The second chapter includes a literature review on the topics based on Work-Life Balance such as the outcomes, generational differences, the changing nature of work, employee health, Work-Life Balance programs, employee motivation as well as the Corona Pandemic. In order to achieve a full understanding of the research, the literature review refers to the findings obtained through peer-reviewed literature, theories, and models. At the end of this chapter a conceptual framework is created, in which all relevant and significant findings from the literature review are briefly presented. With the help of the conceptual framework, a so-called "network" of interconnected concepts are developed that enable a broad understanding of one or several phenomena (Jabareen, 2009).

The third chapter, which covers the research design and methodology, gives insights about the selected methodology. Furthermore, the gathering and analysis of the qualitative primary data are explained in detail.

In the fourth chapter, the results gained from the qualitative data are presented and discussed, leading to a compilation of the main findings. Both the results obtained and the discussions will help to examine and analyse the research results in detail to identify the relevance of these results regarding the pre-defined research objectives.

In the final chapter, the conclusion from the results is presented and reference is again made on the research question of the dissertation. This chapter also shows the existing limitations of the study. Moreover, the researcher will propose recommendations that can be applied in practice and will provide a final conclusion.

Chapter 2

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview

In this chapter, a literature review is presented, which contributes to the development of a theoretical understanding of theories as well as models based on previous studies. The collected literature is the basis for the research and a theoretical framework is formed which will help to achieve the research objective. This study aims to analyse the correlation between Work-Life Balance, employee wellbeing, and corporate performance. Furthermore, the research intends to take a more critical look at the concept of Work-Life Balance and its significance as well as outcomes. Moreover, the literature review covers topics such as the changing world of work, generational differences, Work-Life Balance programs, employee motivation as well as the impact of the Corona Pandemic on day-to-day work life.

Looking at Work-Life Balance specifically in the tech sector, there is scarce literature on the impact on employees and corporate performance. The scope of the relevant and useful literature is therefore limited and thus the explorative research approach was selected. This dissertation investigates a gap in the literature by carrying out further research on Work-Life Balance in Tech Companies.

The literature review is divided into five main sections which are: Work and Life, Generational Differences in the Value of Work, Work-Life Balance, Employee Motivation and the impact of the Corona Pandemic on Working Life.

The first chapter focuses on the definition of work and life. While the second chapter examines the generational differences in people's attitudes to work and their needs. The third chapter critically discusses the main term of the study, namely Work-Life Balance. In this section, contents as well as theories such as: what is Work-Life Balance, how did the interest arise, what are the advantages, and disadvantages as well as Work-Life Balance programs are discussed and analysed. The fourth chapter explains employee motivation using the motivation theories of Maslow and Herzberg. Finally, the literature review concludes with the current topic of the Corona Pandemic and how it has influenced everyday working life and the balance between work and private life.

2.2 Work and Life

2.2.1 The changing nature of Work and Life

In these days, life is becoming increasingly challenging, due to the social, economic as well as technological developments which put a lot of pressure on the workforce (Khan and Agha, 2013).

Society is evolving and new generations are entering the labour market, bringing new challenges for companies as well as a need for transformation. Furthermore, due to technological progress work can be constantly redesigned, companies can grow faster and the way people operate and their working conditions can be changed constantly (Djankov and Saliola, 2019) . Organizations are placing growing demands on their employees and confronting them with more challenging work. Besides, the ability to respond and deal with global business is an added challenge, forcing employees to spend more time working in a more challenging work environment. However, the main challenge for people is to find a balance between work and private life (Khan and Agha, 2013).

2.2.2 Technologies and Work

As we live on a global planet, technology, in particular information and communication technology, transforms the way organizations generate and perceive value, the ways and places in which we work, as well as the interactions and communications between us.

Technologies not only enable people to accomplish tasks faster, better, and more flexibly, but also bring about major changes concerning work performance and how people work in companies (Cascio and Montealegre, 2016).

New technologies and having a work phone or laptop give employees the possibility to work from the office, from home or any location in the world. Besides, employees are now able to receive work orders and tasks while being physically outside of their workplace. The use of a working phone or laptop, as well as the changes resulting from new technologies not only, have advantages.

Studies have indicated that employees can feel overloaded by constantly checking and sending e-mails, as well as unexpected phone calls outside working hours. Some people also have the feeling that they are reachable around the clock, 7 days a week. Consequently, employees may feel both convenience and stress which can lead to a "Work-Life conflict" caused by the new changes in technology (Wang *et al.*, 2016).

2.2.3 Work-Life Ideologies

Some researchers have done general research on the topic of "balancing work and private life". However, there has been little research to date to understand how individuals view this topic. Understanding the interface between work and life is key (Leslie *et al.*, 2019).

In recent years we have witnessed a significant increase of women in employment, which has led to a change in the family structure. Moving away from the "one breadwinner - one housewife" model and shifting to a dual career concept. For this reason, men and women are exposed to considerable challenges both at work and at home, and orientation at the intersection of work and private life has become an omnipresent social challenge. However, the understanding of what many people today have of work and life is not complete. Most of the literature only focuses on the aspect of emotions and behaviour instead of also looking at cognition (Leslie *et al.*, 2019).

2.3 Generational differences in the Value of Work

One of the major challenges for companies will be the retirement of over 75 million ageing employees and their replacement through an equivalent amount of new young people starting their careers. To effectively integrate these new employees into the business, companies need a clear understanding of the new generation's work values and how these may differ from the earlier generations (Cennamo and Gardner, 2008). The current workforce consists of four generations: the Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964), Generation X (born 1965-1981), and Generation Me (also known as Millennials/Gen Y, born 1982-1995) and GenZ (born after 1996) (Cennamo and Gardner, 2008; Pulevska-Ivanovska *et al.*, 2017). Research shows that there are a lot of generational differences regarding personality, characteristics, mental health, behaviour and attitudes to work (Cennamo and Gardner, 2008).

The Tech industry to be considered is mainly represented by Millennials, as the average age of the employees is between 27 and 39, depending on the company. However, there is also a small percentage of employees who are slightly younger or older (Statista, 2016)

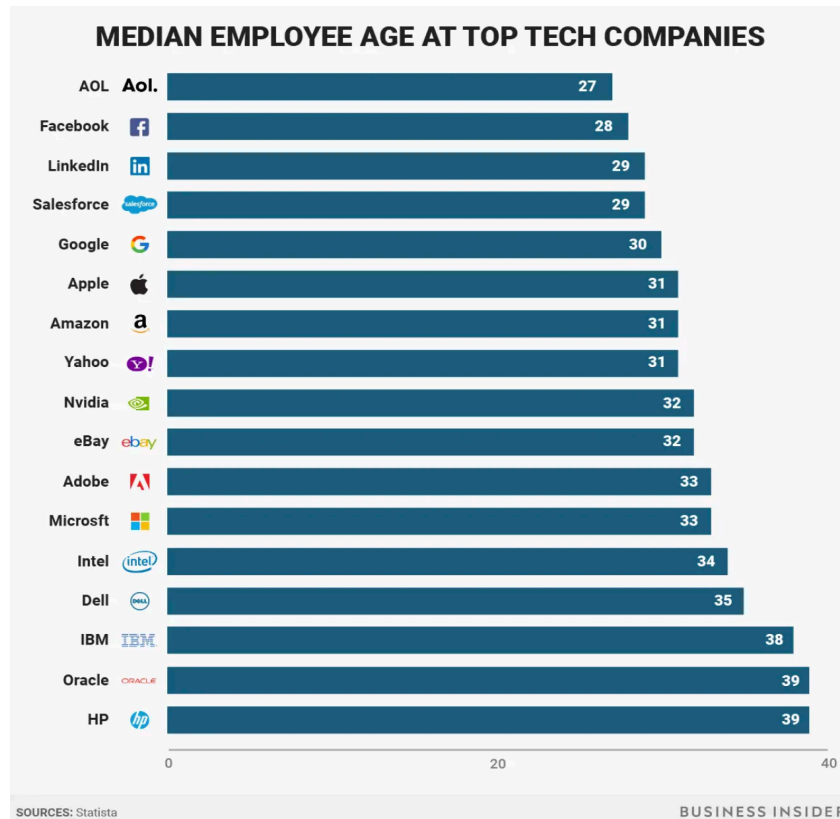


Figure 2: Median employee age at top tech companies,
<https://www.businessinsider.com/median-tech-employee-age-chart-2017-8?r=DE&IR=T>,
 (Accessed: 19.04.20)

For this reason, this study focuses mainly on Generation Me and the upcoming workforce Generation Z and a little on Generation X.

For example, a survey shows that people aged 27 to 40, which are the main people working in Tech industries say that if they inherited a lot of money they would quit their jobs and pursue their leisure and life plans. On the other hand, employees older than 40 years (Gen X) say that no matter how rich they were, they would feel an obligation to work (Twenge, 2010). Understanding generational change and their different views are important as the generations born after 1982 are the new workforce as you can see strongly in industries like Tech. A number of studies have shown that Millennials do not consider work to be the most important thing in their lives and value leisure time as well as having a weaker work ethic compared to the generations before.

To recruit Millennials, companies should focus on Work-Life Balance and flexible working hours, as these generations value their freedom and flexibility (Twenge, 2010). Generation Z stands for the strongest generational change the workplace has ever experienced, representing a challenge for companies. This generation is raised in the 2000s a period of transformation driven by the Internet, smartphones, laptops, open networks, digital media, and thus they have technology in their DNA.

The members of Generation Z value family time and work ethics greatly in their lives. In contrast to Millennials regarding Work-Life Balance, Generation Z places more value on itself than on other people. When looking for a job, this generation pays particular attention to what a company can offer them, such as a healthy Work-Life Balance, growth opportunities, experience, and more (Pulevska-Ivanovska *et al.*, 2017).

2.4 Work-Life Balance

2.4.1 What is Work-Life Balance?

In today's world, a balance between work and life is a constant issue of discussions, which assumes that each individual has too much work rather than too little work, making it difficult to balance professional and private life (Kelliher *et al.*, 2019).

The term Work-Life Balance refers to two key elements: on the one hand work, which means the commitment of working and other hand life which means the time and activities outside of work. Work-Life Balance is often presented as a scale that aims to ensure that the demands of both work and private life are equivalent and that there are minimal conflicts between responsibilities at work and outside work (Sirgy and Lee, 2018).

The perspectives for Work-Life Balance within an organization:

Employee

- The issue of managing work and personal/family commitments.

Employer

- Meeting the challenge of generating a supportive corporate culture in which employees can concentrate on their tasks at work.

Table 2: Employee/ Employer perspectives for Work-Life Balance, own illustration (Lockwood, 2003)

The following illustration shows the nature, causes, and consequences of Work-Life Balance.

<i>Determinants</i>	<i>Nature of the balance</i>	<i>Consequences/impact</i>
Organizational factors	Subjective indicators	
Demands of work	Balance – emphasis	Work satisfaction
Culture of work	equally on home and work	Life satisfaction
		Mental health/well-being
Demands of home	Balance – home central	Stress/illness
Culture of home	Balance – work central	
		Behaviour/performance at work
Individual factors	Spillover and/or	Behaviour/performance at home
Work orientation	interference of work to home	
Personality	Spillover and/or	
Energy	interference of home to work	Impact on others at work
Personal control and coping		Impact on others at home
Gender		
Age	Objective indicators	
Life and career stage	Hours of work	
	“Free” time	
	Family roles	

Figure 3: Nature, causes, and consequences of Work-Life Balance (Guest, 2002)

2.4.2 How did the interest in the Work-Life Balance develop?

In recent years, the issue of a healthy balance between work and private life has become more and more important, especially among the citizens who strive for a satisfied, quality of life. In particular, interest is driven by people's concern that imbalanced relationships between work and family can lead to lower health as well as performance results for individuals, families, and organizations (Kalliath and Brough, 2008).

Today, stress at work is a widespread phenomenon in the work environment, which is often a topic of discussion, as prosperous societies are exposed to high workloads and therefore often suffer from emotional exhaustion (Sonnentag *et al.*, 2010). This leads to an emerging problem that needs to be solved.

Moreover, as a result of globalisation in the workplace, the pressure on workers has increased as they have to do their work faster due to shorter deadlines and different schedules (O'Carroll, 2008). Not only does globalisation lead to pressure on employees, but also advances in technology (e.g. social media, smartphones...) and the information burden, the need for a quick response such as 24/7 accessibility and the speed of change

with the resulting changes and adjustments take our time and may turn into sources of pressure (Guest, 2002).

Particularly in some professions, like in sales, it has been observed that the new communication technologies such as social media (Google +, Facebook, LinkedIn), as well as constant active communication technologies like the mobile internet and smartphones, mean that employees today have no choice whether they want to be reachable or not. For example, business teams are often spread around the world and still meet daily via video conferencing (O'Carroll, 2008). Furthermore, due to the mentioned upswing in global business, employees are contactable 24 hours a day, no matter where they are in the world. They receive messages from work, whether it is on a weekend or holiday, and can never really relax from work (Marshall *et al.*, 2012).

Studies have shown that Ireland now has the longest average working time among the EU Member States, with 6.1 percent of men - and 4.4 percent of women - who work in more than 60 hours a week. In addition, 19.8 percent of Irish companies are running 24 hours per day and 7 days per week (James, 2011). Moreover, there are no signs so far that this will improve in the coming years, and instead, there are indications that working hours may continue to rise and more employees may be affected. Besides, people also report that they suffer from greater work intensity and pressure. Work intensity was measured by subjective answers to questions about the proportion of time worked at very high speed, short deadlines, and extra working hours. The result of this was that work demands dominated life and a feeling of imbalance between work and life arose. In today's society, there is a growing concern that the quality of life is diminishing. Not only the pressure and increasing demands at work, longer working hours, more evening and weekend work and less free time are factors, but also the changing work environment, such as the increase in the number of working women, single-family households and more contribute to this concern (Guest, 2002).

2.4.3 The Consequences of a lack of Work-Life Balance

According to researches, a work-life imbalance leads to poorer mental as well as physical health and lower performance at work which will be mentioned below.

Some people become depressed or suffer from anxiety due to the imbalance between work and family/personal life. Mental disorders are widespread in the workplace and have a major effect on the professional performance of workers as they might have reduced performance and avoid work. Furthermore, it can have an impact on their health and wellbeing. One of the factors leading to this is the stress and dissatisfaction at work (Wang, 2006).

Nowadays stress at work is one of the main work-related health problems within Europe. Based on this fact diseases such as burnout are no longer a rarity (Van den Broeck *et al.*, 2017). Burnout is seen as an emotional response to long-term stress at work, where the different work demands may exceed a person's adaptive capabilities (Tone Innstrand *et al.*, 2008).

The issue of occupational stress and its consequences is becoming of growing attention in areas such as medicine, psychology, and corporate management (Mullen *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, not only for the employees it has negative consequences if no importance is attached to Work-Life Balance in the company but also for the corporate performance as dissatisfied, stressed employees will not be loyal, perform badly and thus harm the business in the long run as well as resulting in higher fluctuation rates (Musyoka *et al.*, 2012).

2.4.4 The Importance of Work-Life Balance and its Outcomes

In the past, Work-Life Balance has been seen as a personal problem, and employers have only responded to the needs of their employees by, for example, offering additional benefits such as paid maternity leave. However, with the changing world of work, the desire of employees seeking to reconcile work and private life is increasing. For this reason, Irish employers have started to support employees more actively with the help of supportive Work-Life Balance measures (Kim, 2014).

According to studies, Work-Life Balance programs, as well as flexible working hours, can help to strengthen employee retention to a company as well as reduces the conflict between personal life and work. Furthermore, it reduces stress, improves the wellbeing of employees as well as their attitude towards work. Organizations that offer good Work-Life Balance to their employees benefit from satisfied, motivated, happy, and better performing employees who enjoy working and are willing to give their best to achieve the set goals of the company. In addition, by ensuring a balance between work and life, employees are given enough time to spend it with their families, for example. This, in turn, has the advantage that employees bring more positive feelings to the workplace and their job performance (AlHazemi, 2016).

A proper Work-Life Balance not only has positive effects for the employees but also for the company, as the employees perform better, are more loyal, more engaged and absenteeism, as well as turnover, is lower (AlHazemi, 2016; Pulevska-Ivanovska *et al.*, 2017).

2.4.5 The downside of Work-Life Balance

For some years there has been an academic interest in Work-Life Balance - what it involves, how it can be achieved; the results of a "good" or "bad" Work-Life Balance; and how employers could develop a policy to support them (Kelliher *et al.*, 2019).

Most studies on Work-Life Balance only show the positive aspects it can bring, but it should not be forgotten that Work-Life Balance also has negative sides.

For example, meta-analytical studies have shown that working from home does not automatically make work easier and leads to stress reduction. It is argued that working from home can more easily lead to distractions and conflicts within the family, which in turn can have a negative impact on mental health (Perrigino *et al.*, 2018c).

Furthermore, existing research on Work-Life Balance only takes a limited vision into account, as Work-Life Balance policies focus mainly on working parents and their needs. Since the term "life" is understood as fulfilling caring activities for dependent children. Life should be much more diversified and should also consider the needs of employees who do not have children and want to pursue their hobbies or other matters in their private lives. At the same time, "work" is mostly based on a traditional model characterised by full-time, permanent employment, with an employer and a conventional understanding of work. Recent developments in work and employment relationships, such as short-term, part-time or zero-hour contracts, as well as leisure activities, caring for the elderly or pets, are so far not addressed in companies' Work-Life Balance policies (Kelliher *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, organizations need to consider, when implementing Work-Life Balance programs, that they incur costs to the company as they want to ensure the best possible offer for their employees such as mental health or wellness days, financial support for parents etc.

Despite the great Work-Life Balance programs that a company can offer its employees, some of them leave the company anyway, and this leads to the situation that businesses have to search for new employees, hire and train them, resulting in even higher costs (Rodríguez-Sánchez *et al.*, 2020). Based on this fact, it is questionable whether Work-Life programs are really worthwhile for companies to retain good employees in the long run.

2.4.5 Work-Life Balance Programs

Nowadays, many companies are moving towards a new field of human resources management, which helps employees to balance the demands of work and life.

The so-called Work-Life Balance programs are developed as a strategic weapon against the competition for the best workers. A lot of businesses have implemented Work-Life Balance programs hoping it will help their employees. Moreover, companies hope to take advantage of public relations by being seen as "family-friendly" and thus become more attractive as an employer (Nord *et al.*, 2002). The Work-Life Balance programs are designed to increase organisational efforts to recruit, retain, and motivate the most valuable employees. It should not only be seen as part of personnel policy, but also as part of the necessary cultural change and the way we view career and work (Khan and Agha, 2013).

2.4.6 Resource-Based View and Work-Life Balance

A theoretical framework that is a useful basis for the research is the so-called Research-Based View. According to Barney, the Research-Based View states that resources that are scarce, precious, and inimitable, as well as non-substitutable, have the potential to be sources of sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991).

In today's fierce competition between companies, businesses are aware of the fact that employees with outstanding abilities as well as people and their management are becoming increasingly important. The employees in a company are seen as an important unique resource, as it is assumed that they create a highly competitive advantage if they are well-trained and motivated (Rodríguez-Sánchez *et al.*, 2020). Every employee is driven by personal resources to master the activities in their lives. A lot of conflicts that arise between work and private life are caused by people who feel or know that they are not physically able to cope with the demands they are supposed to fulfil.

One way to counteract the conflicts is to hire more staff, which has the additional advantage of providing some work benefits such as satisfaction and a Work-Life Balance (Greenblatt, 2002).

The following figure illustrates that some behaviours, as well as circumstances at work, are restorative and others are depleting. This same approach also applies to non-work. The focus of this model is to lead the work-oriented decisions to personal resource gains in order to create a positive result for the company and employee satisfaction through a healthy balance between work and life (Greenblatt, 2002).

RESEARCH-BASED VIEW OF PERSONAL RESOURCES AND WORK/LIFE

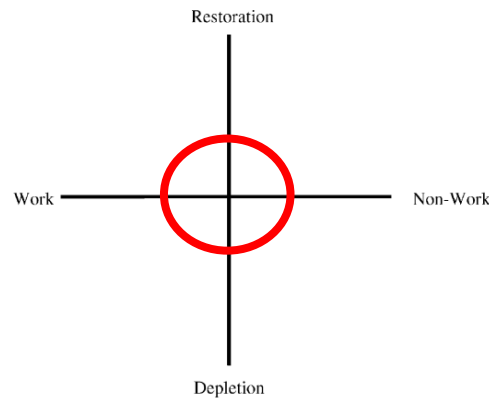


Figure 4: Research-Based View of Personal Resources and Work/Life (Greenblatt, 2002)

2.5 Employee Motivation

According to empirical evidence, it has been proven that motivated employees lead to higher organizational performance. The aim of every organization is to build a strong and good relationship with its employees. Nevertheless, individuals have different competitive needs, which are driven by varying motivators. A number of employees, for example, are motivated by rewards, whereas others concentrate on performance or safety. Thus, understanding the actual motivation of employees is key for companies and their managers to maximize corporate performance. Several years ago, traditional motivation theories were developed which concentrate on certain factors that motivate employees (Lee and Raschke, 2016). Well-known motivation theories were developed by Abraham Maslow and Frederick Herzberg, for example.

2.5.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The psychologist Abraham Maslow pursued a motivational theory in which he explained through the use of a pyramid with five-tiers that the psychological needs of a person according to their priority (starting with basic needs to self-actualization) must be met in a certain order and that people only reach the next stage of the pyramid if they have fulfilled the previous stage (McLeod, 2018).

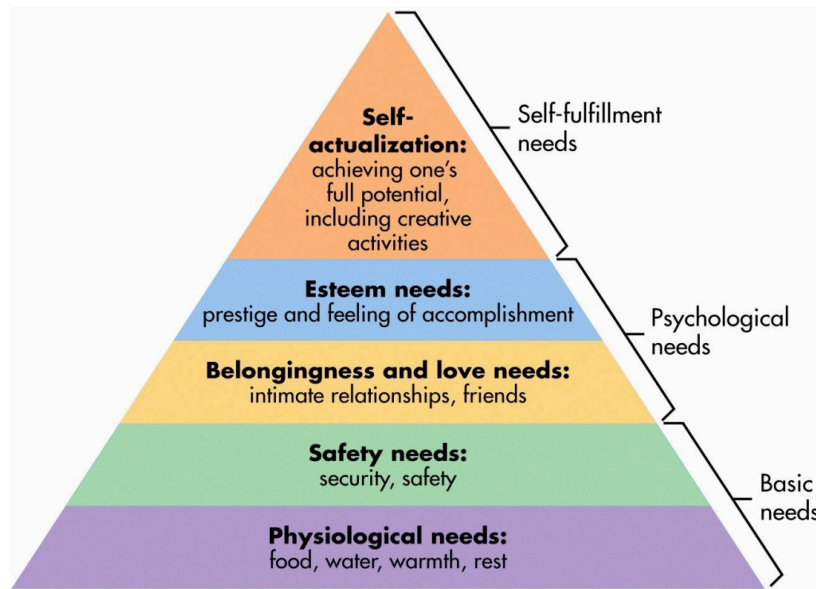


Figure 5: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2018)

An adapted version of the Maslow Hierarchy of Needs was released by HR Zone in 2014. This pyramid illustrates the engagement of employees at work. In the Maslow Pyramid, people need basic nutrition and shelter. In the following pyramid, the payment of rent is the basic need. The highest point in Maslow's pyramid is self-actualization and in the new version it is the connection to the company and to do the best for it (Brito, 2018). This pyramid can also be used to understand employee motivation in terms of Work-Life Balance. If employees have a happy as well as balanced work/life situation and are engaged, they are more willing to perform at their best for the success of a company.

The following illustration shows the adapted version of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs:

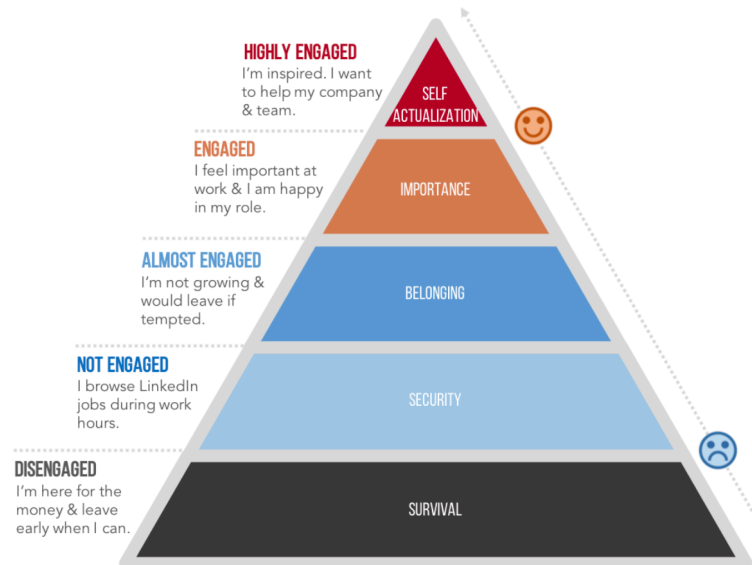


Figure 6: Adapted Pyramid for Employee Engagement
<https://www.cmo.com/opinion/articles/2018/3/15/mapping-maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-to-employee-advocacy.html#gs.b2tpmx> (Accessed 06.18.2020)

2.5.2 Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

In 1959 the American psychologist Frederick Herzberg conducted a study on the attitude of employees towards their work which was influenced by Maslow's hierarchy of needs and discovered that people have two types of needs, a lower and a higher one. As a result, he developed the Two-Factor Theory in which companies need to address both in order to motivate their employees. His theory is often referred to as the "Hygiene Motivation Theory" because it divides motivations into two categories, hygiene and growth factors. According to Herzberg, growth factors are the actual driving factors of motivation. He considers motivation factors as intrinsic and hygiene factors as extrinsic in the work. In the view of Herzberg, the motivational factors aimed to increase and improve job satisfaction; while the hygiene factors contribute to the reduction of job satisfaction and lead to discontent. Examples of motivation factors are the work itself, personal improvement and growth, responsibility, recognition, and happiness at work. On the other hand, there are hygiene factors that show a lack of growth motivation. Examples for hygiene factors are salary, interpersonal relationships, company policies as well as working conditions (Alshmemri *et al.*, 2017).

Studies have shown that motivation is a significant factor that affects the performance as well as the behaviour of employees at the workplace.

For example, if a workplace offers some benefits such as a good Work-Life Balance and good working conditions such as environment and adequate salary etc., employees are more motivated and engaged in the workplace which at the same time improves their performance and can lead to better outcomes for the company (Yusoff *et al.*, 2013).

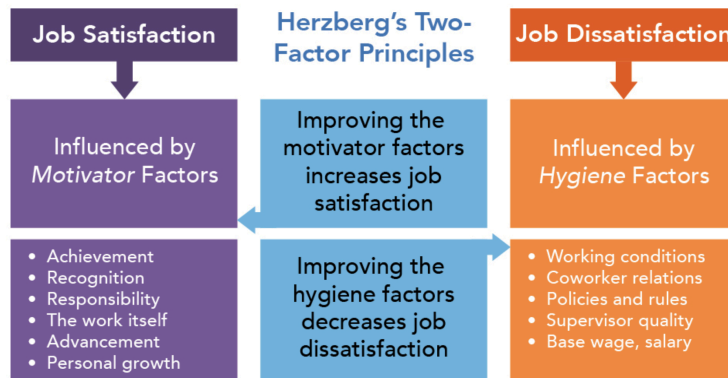


Figure 7: Herzberg Two-Factor Theory, <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wmopen-introductiontobusiness/chapter/need-based-theories/> (Accessed: 06.07.20)

2.6 The impact of the Corona Pandemic on Working Life

On the 31st of December 2019, the WHO (World Health Organization) reported a new virus called COVID-19, which was discovered in the city of Wuhan in China and causes pneumonia as well as being highly contagious. This virus spread rapidly around the world at the beginning of 2020 and a worldwide pandemic emerged (Qasim *et al.*, 2020).

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, a lockdown was imposed in many countries, including Ireland, which severely impacted the economy and changed the lives of many people (Gräbner *et al.*, 2020).

This pandemic had a tremendous effect on work and family life such as: working from home, social distancing, online education as well as virtual meetings which are turning into the “New Normality” of everyday life (Singh, 2020).

The pandemic confronted companies and governments around the world with serious challenges. At the same time, new advanced technology is becoming a key factor in successfully fighting the crisis (Singh, 2020). Moreover, COVID-19 has resulted in the largest number of employees worldwide now being forced to work from home (Ahmad, 2020). For a number of multinational companies, working from home was nothing new. Some have encouraged it even before the pandemic, as it can increase productivity and save costs. However, it is important for the organization to provide a robust digital infrastructure and to consistently encourage, monitor, and support employees as well as their wellbeing in every possible way to ensure that they are satisfied with the situation and can successfully carry out their work from anywhere in the world.

Especially in Tech Companies, the possibility to work normally from home is given, as there are some tools that make this possible like Google Docs, MS Teams, Hangouts, Zoom, and Skype for regular meetings.

The tech industry may be technically ready to face the unexpected change, but it is also essential to be prepared on an emotional and cultural basis for the "new world" (Singh, 2020).

2.6.1 Post-COVID 19

According to current studies, a change in the work culture is expected. COVID-19 and its effects will continue to influence our lives, the way we work, study, socialize, communicate, and travel.

The time has come to welcome this cultural move and adjust our lifestyle to the anticipated new work culture. Throughout and after the COVID-19 era, employees will step into a new world of work in which there is a so-called "mini-home office" in many homes. Furthermore, it can become a normality that organizations will allow people to work from home. Based on research from the Global Research firm Gartner, 74 percent of Chief Financial Officers are considering continuously shift their workforce to remote working from home in order to save costs (like electricity, phone, infrastructure maintenance etc.) post the COVID-19 pandemic (Singh, 2020).

Furthermore, the home office policy will benefit women in the workforce who have kids at home. This can lead to many good female talents entering the world of work as they are more flexible and can work from home. A survey conducted by the job search portal Flexi Jobs in 2019 revealed that about 31 percent of female employees took an undesired professional break after the birth of their children because it was not always possible to work from home (Singh, 2020).

Despite all the positive aspects of the home office, there are also negative aspects, such as the fact that the boundaries between personal and professional time can merge. It may lead to a mixing of the days with the night and the days of the week with the weekend. The feeling of free time can be reduced, leaving only the "official holiday". It can also lead to employees being distracted at home and not being able to perform their work to the fullest (Singh, 2020).

2.7 Conceptual Framework

After the completion of the literature review and gaining a deeper understanding of factors relating to the research objective, the exploratory study intends to develop a **conceptual framework** by integrating the literature review. The depicted illustration shows the conceptual framework. In this overview it will become evident that the main issue in the literature review was Work-Life Balance which resulted in three main aspects that are organisational support, employee outcomes and organisational outcomes. Based on these three aspects the research questions, the research objective as well as the data gathering instrument have been decided. Subsequently, the methodology in which the researcher has chosen the qualitative approach was developed. The primary data will be collected by means of semi-structured interviews and the questions will be formed with the help of the three main aspects of the literature review. Then, the collected primary data will be analysed and discussed with those of the literature review and the research findings will be presented. Finally, the research findings will lead to a conclusion of this dissertation.

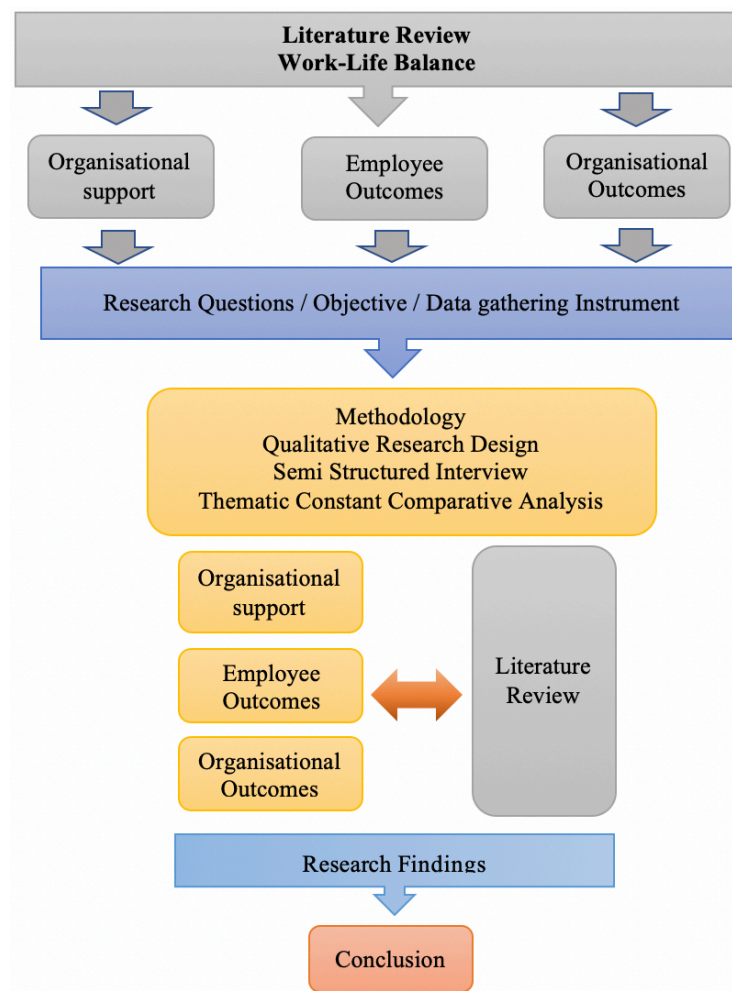


Figure 8: Conceptual Framework (own illustration)

The following illustration was created with the background of the reviewed literature which explains the above mentioned three main aspects in more detail: Organizational Support, Organizational Outcomes, Employee Outcomes. It shows the conflict between work and private life which can be solved with the help of a Work-Life Balance approach such as WLB policies/benefits in a company. The positive results for the employees as well as for the company will be presented and a proposal on how the company can support a Good Work-Life Balance is provided. Work-Life Balance is the main term in this study, which can play an important role in the wellbeing of the employees as well as for the outcome of a company.

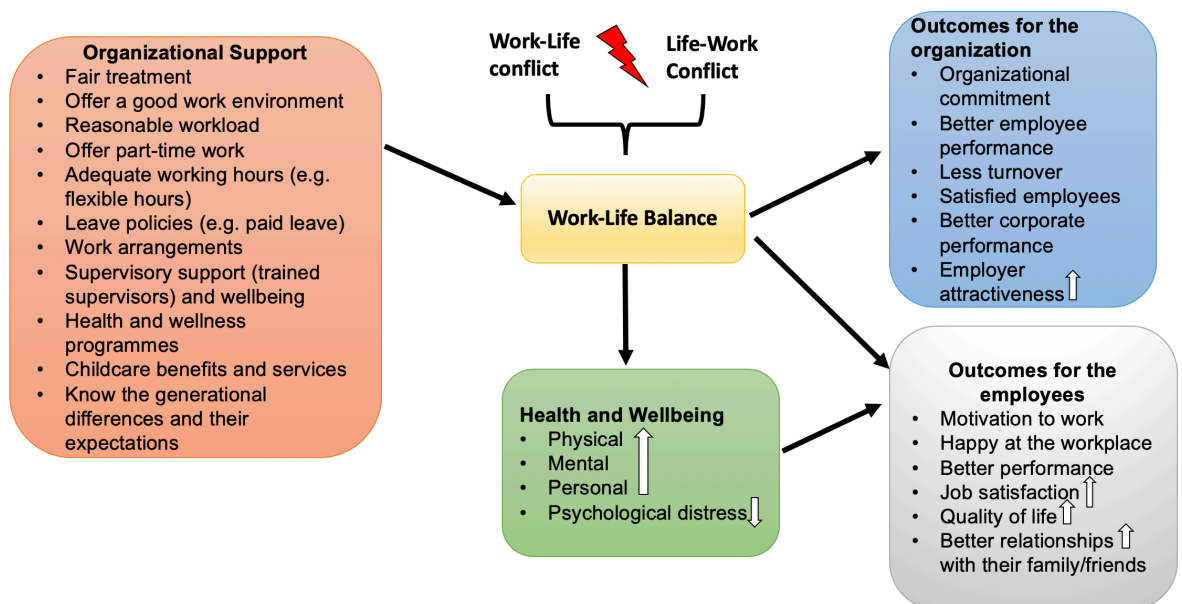


Figure 9: Illustration developed out of WLB Literature Review (own illustration)

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the relevant literature concerning the research objective. Important points of the literature overview include the concept of Work-Life Balance, its benefits as well as disadvantages, the changing world of work, generational differences, Work-Life Balance programs, employee motivation and the impact of the Corona Pandemic on day-to-day work life.

With the help of the relevant literature, a conceptual framework was created to help investigate the term Work-Life Balance in Tech Companies in Dublin and thus to be able to analyse and understand it better.

While reviewing the literature, the researcher found a gap in the existing literature. There is a lack of research on how employees really understand and think about the term Work-Life Balance, what they think about all the so-called "positive benefits" of Work-Life Balance programs or policies and whether it really helps to achieve a healthy balance between life and work.

For this reason, the study will focus more on individuals in the specific sector, on what they consider important for a balanced life between work and private life and what they think about their current Work-Life Balance situation in their job/company and what recommendations they have for improving it.

The next chapter outlines the methodology and research design of the dissertation, which gives an insight into the gathering and analysis of primary data collected to address the research objective.

Chapter 3

3. Methodology and Research Design

3.1 Overview

The following chapter aims to explore the different forms of research, each of which is examined from an ontological and epistemological perspective. The ontological view relates to beliefs on the nature of reality. While on the other hand, the epistemological view relates to assumptions on knowledge (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, this chapter focuses on the methodological approach, research design, and philosophy which has been defined for the implementation and analysis of primary research.

The concept of **research philosophy** describes a framework of beliefs and hypotheses concerning the development of knowledge. In Saunders' research philosophy, this concept will be explained visually like an onion. Using the onion research approach, it is explained that the research is to be carried out in the same way as peeling an onion - from the outer layer to the inside layers. Furthermore, it is important to understand the outer layers of the onion and to explain them before going deeper into the inner layers. In the following section, this framework is used to assist in the definition of the research design; as well as the specific highlighted approaches which are used in this chapter (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). The researcher supplemented the "interview" (qualitative research) in Saunders' framework as the selected research strategy.

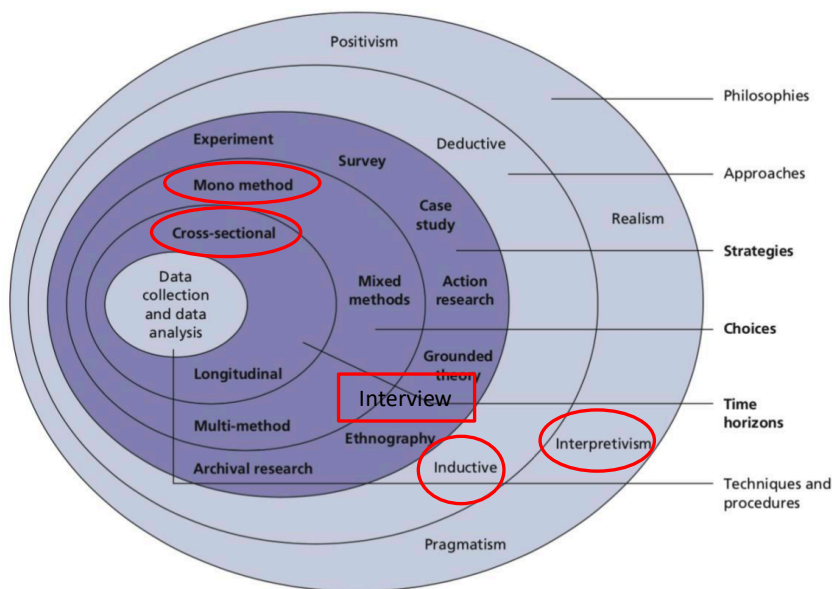


Figure 10: The 'research onion' (Saunders *et al.*, 2019)

The figure above illustrates the so-called “research onion” by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019). The first step a researcher should take on the way to the centre of the "research onion" is to think about the research philosophy. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), the most important research philosophies are positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, and pragmatism.

Positivism	Critical Realism	Interpretivism	Pragmatism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One true reality • External and independent • Scientific method • Facts which are observable and measurable • Objective view of researcher • Typically deductive • Quantitative approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The actual and the real • External and independent • Knowledge historically situated • Researcher objective as possible • Methods and data can be adjusted to subject 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex, rich, interpretations • New understandings and perceptions • Subjective • Typically inductive • Qualitative approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reality is practical consequence of ideas • Complex, rich • Focus on problems and true theories • Value-driven research • Mixed methods, qualitative or quantitative approach

Table 3: Research Philosophies (Saunders *et al.*, 2019)

In this dissertation, the research philosophy of interpretivism is used which will be explained in detail in chapter 3.2.

The second layer of the "research onion" is the research approach which can be either deductive or inductive. Deductive research is an approach in which existing theories, for example from the literature review, are examined and tested by using data (Collis and Hussey, 2013). In most cases, this leads to the use of the quantitative approach (Rahi, 2017). On the other hand, there is the inductive approach which is a study that develops a theory based on the observation of empirical reality, i.e. general conclusions are made from specific research cases. In other words, it moves from the specific (individual interviews) to the general knowledge (existing theories) (Collis and Hussey, 2013). This results in the fact that the qualitative approach is usually carried out (Rahi, 2017). As there is no particular research on the tech industry in Ireland regarding the Work-Life Balance situation the inductive approach will be used.

Furthermore, the next layer of the "research onion" will define the research strategy. This can be either descriptive, exploratory explanatory or predictive (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

Descriptive Research	Exploratory Research	Explanatory Research	Predictive Research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and gain information on characteristics of a certain problem • Description of what exists • Questions start with what more than how • Goal→ describe phenomenon and its characteristic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research problem with little or no previous studies • Goal→ look for ideas/patterns and create hypothesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of descriptive research • More analytical • Goal→ understand phenomena 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation for what is happening in certain situation • Prediction of phenomena based on a hypothesis • Gives how, where why answers

Table 4: Research Strategies (Collis and Hussey, 2013)

Exploratory research is used in this dissertation which is explained further in section 3.3. To get into the heart of the "research onion" and to obtain primary data and finally analyse it, the researcher decides to focus only on qualitative research (mono method). Considering the fact that Work-Life Balance has often been analysed using quantitative data, the researcher wants to conduct qualitative interviews to gain a deeper understanding and validity.

Besides, the time horizon in which the data collection takes place must also be taken into account. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), a researcher has the option to choose between cross-sectional or longitudinal studies. The so-called cross-sectional studies examine a specific occurrence at a specific time. The longitudinal studies, in contrast, focus on a longer time horizon and relate to a number of events that occur within a certain period of time (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

Finally, it is necessary to decide on concrete research techniques and procedures in order to obtain relevant data. In this process, it must be considered which interview partners would be appropriate for qualitative research. Furthermore, the researcher will conduct semi-structured interviews which will be explained later on. The collected data of the interviews will be recorded and transcribed to be able to code and categorize the topics, and in the end to get a meaningful result of this study.

3.2 Research Philosophy and Approach

In this dissertation, the researcher has chosen to apply the paradigm of interpretivism as this approach explores the complex nature of social reality (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Interpretivism begins from an intellectual position, which uses human interpretation to develop knowledge concerning the social world and aims to gain a deeper understanding and meaning for their behaviour (Chen *et al.*, 2011). Within the study, it was possible for the researcher to obtain a subjective epistemology and diverse interpretative understanding by means of the qualitative approach (Bunniss and Kelly, 2010). Each individual person who participated in this research had a different perception and interpretation of the Work-Life Balance situation in the respective company, depending on their personality, needs, expectations, and feelings. Consequently, this reality is characterized by the perception and interpretation of every individual and is, therefore, the research approach which is the closest representation of "reality" (Chen *et al.*, 2011). As a result of the interview findings, the researcher identified various realities. Subsequently, in chapter 4, the gained data were compared, described in more detail and their meaning was interpreted.

One objective of this research was to understand the perception of Work-Life Balance in the particular company for which the individuals work and to understand their interpretation of a good balance between work and free time related to their current job role. Therefore, one of the most important research questions was related to the existence, implementation, or the offer and possibilities for improving the Work-Life Balance in Tech Companies.

Furthermore, the researcher aimed to find out why the respondents work in the tech industry and what motivates or expects them to be more satisfied and motivated. The motivation as well as the expectations of every participant were explored through open-ended questions, which examined the understanding and meaning of these aspects in more detail. An example of a question that was asked to obtain interview data on motivation, expectations, and suggestions for improvement was:

“Are you satisfied with your current Work-Life situation or what would your expectations be at your company to gain a better balance between work and private life and to be more motivated?”

This reality of the respondents was formed by the perception of each person through their interpretation of both information and benefits offered by companies, which is why the participants' perception is the closest to "reality" in the selected research method (Chen *et al.*, 2011).

The issue of Work-Life Balance, in general, has been extensively researched, but never specifically on the tech industry in Ireland and its employees. The majority of the research found was based on quantitative methods (surveys) to determine the extent to which Work-Life Balance affects people's lives, how many hours employees work in the tech industry, and the effects of stress on them. However, no qualitative research has been conducted to date that attempts to analyse the individual people in the specific industry in terms of Work-Life Balance, stress, wellbeing, and motivation. Also, the correlation between Work-Life Balance, employee wellbeing, and corporate performance have not been analysed in any qualitative research. These are the most important issues which contribute to the implementation of a qualitative study in the context of this research. With the help of the qualitative data, a deeper understanding as well as better validity is offered, which indicates again the interpretivism (Lin, 1998).

This approach helped to collect more comprehensive data to analyse the different people, their needs, and motivations and helped to gain a better insight into the existence and implementation of Work-Life Balance in Irish Tech Companies.

Moreover, the different, as well as similar answers of the respondents, could be better recognized and thus a better understanding of their views and feelings could be gained, which in turn led to a better and more meaningful result of the study.

The theory which was analysed in the literature review provided the basis for creating the semi-structured interview questions. Additionally, the research adopted the inductive method, which allows identifying categories during the data collection (Collis and Hussey, 2013).

The purpose of this research is to gain further evidence and understanding of the study regarding Work-Life Balance, employee wellbeing, motivation, and corporate performance in Irish Tech Companies. Accordingly, the main purpose was to provide additional information for further research, and the findings of the qualitative research could even lead to a better as well as a more holistic view of the study.

3.3 Research Strategy and Time Horizon

In this section of the dissertation, a research strategy is developed that considers the assumptions made in the research philosophy.

The purpose of research can generally be divided into explorative, descriptive, predictive and explanatory research (Collis and Hussey, 2013). This study and its results can be classified as explorative research, as there is no precise research on Work-Life Balance in Irish Tech Companies. An exploratory study, as the name indicates, attempts to explore a topic or gain insights into a specific issue, usually asking the question of "what" or "how". Exploratory research is carried out on a research problem or topic in cases where there are little or no previous studies. This kind of study is designed to search for patterns as well as ideas and to develop a theory instead of testing it (Collis and Hussey, 2013).

A research design is used to structure the data collection process to gain insightful and appropriate information (Ghauri *et al.*, 2020). For a general orientation of the research there are three different research designs, which are qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods, which is a mix between the qualitative and the quantitative approach (Creswell, 2009).

The quantitative research it is associated with philosophical assumptions. Based on this fact, quantitative research is a reality that is measurable, autonomous as well as free of values. The data will be collected for example, through surveys or experiments (Collis and Hussey, 2013).

The table below show strengths as well as weaknesses of quantitative research:

Strengths	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reliability through critical analysis• Short time frame required for managed survey• Quick administration and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No perception and beliefs of humans• Lack of resources for large size Research• No in-depth expertise

Table 5: Strengths and Weaknesses of quantitative research (Choy, 2014)

A qualitative method on the other hand is an approach in the study of the social world, which tries to describe and analyse different people and their behaviour from the perspective of the person studied. The obtained results are intended to be deep, rich as well as meaningful through theoretical generalization so that conclusions can be made (Amaratunga *et al.*, 2002). In this dissertation the researcher chose the approach of qualitative research.

The following table shows the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research:

Strengths	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perspective of the homogeneous exploration • Questions with the help of open-end → broader investigation • Understanding of behaviours, values, beliefs, feelings and assumptions of the interviewees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectivity cannot really be achieved → based on interviewees interpretations/experience • Interviewing process is time consuming

Table 6: Strengths and Weaknesses of qualitative research (Choy, 2014)

To obtain relevant data through qualitative research, the main strategy is to conduct interviews. The interview is one of the most important qualitative data collection method, as it allows the researcher to ask individual and specific questions to possibly gain deeper insights into the research topic (Qu and Dumay, 2011).

The collection of qualitative data is connected with an interpretive endeavour, as the aim is to collect several interviews that provide a detailed idea of how certain phenomena are perceived by different individuals who experienced them (Bunniss and Kelly, 2010). With the help of the interviews, it was possible to ask diverse employees of Tech Companies about Work-Life Balance and get different information about their experiences and understanding, which could contribute to the result of the study.

The interviews conducted were semi-structured with open-end questions which are explorative by nature and had a defined structure. In the so-called semi-structured interviews, the researcher knows what kind of information she wants to collect from the interview and therefore asks specific questions to obtain a meaningful result. Before the interview started, the researcher reviewed the literature to ask specific questions.

Furthermore, the researcher was analysing the data collected during the interview to see if they were in line with theories from the literature or if there are new findings (Miles and Gilbert, 2005).

The explorative study gathered data based on subjective experiences as well as views of various individuals in different job positions in order to investigate the Work-Life Balance situation in various multinational technology companies in Dublin. The researcher evaluated several interpretations, provided by ten participants, which consisted of 3 managers, 4 mid/senior level and 3 entry level employees. In addition, the researcher tried to figure out whether the information received from the respondents was consistent with the findings of the theory already identified by the researcher.

The questions of the interview were classified into themes using content from the literature review to empirically investigate them and to ultimately gain useful data to supplement the empirical research. The open-end questions were divided into three sections to get a better overview.

The following table presents an interview sheet that was created to help to structure the process of the interview:

Number	Main Questions (open-end)	Subject Areas	Directing Questions
1.	Introductory question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current work situation 	
1.1	Could you please tell me something about your current job role and what your typical working day would look like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job role Task field Typical Day Working hours Leisure time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What time do you start working and approx. finish work? How long do you commute? Do you still have time after work for meeting people, do sport etc.?
2.	Work Life Balance		
2.1	Did you hear about the term Work-Life Balance and what do you understand by it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of Work-Life Balance Personal interpretation/experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you think it is possible to achieve a balanced life between work and life? Do you have the feeling that your life is balanced?

Table 7: Interview Sheet (own illustration)

The interview sheet was divided into "main questions" and "directing questions", which were used to assist the interviewers in further deepening certain areas of the research topic. The directing questions only applied when the respondent has not addressed essential aspects that were necessary for the research in his/her response.

The column " Themes " has been created to follow-up the mentioned themes by the people interviewed which are later important for the analysis. The full interview sheet can be found in Appendix D.

Furthermore, in this dissertation, the time horizon will refer to a cross-sectional study, as the interviews must be completed within 3 months and thus only provide a short outline of the research (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

Further details on the interviews, such as interview participants or selection criteria, are given in Section 3.4.

3.4 Research Method

3.4.1 Sources

The collection of primary data was carried out, as mentioned earlier, using qualitative interviews with employees in different job positions from several Tech Companies in Dublin.

Profile of Interviewees:

In order to achieve a reasonable extent of representativeness and sufficient data as well as information, the researcher interviewed 10 people. All 10 interviewees are hired in different Tech Companies in Dublin, have diverse job roles and positions with work experience ranging from entry-level to management level. Four of the interviewed employees work in the sales area and the remaining six are employed in different fields. Moreover, the main age of the respondents is between 25 and 36, which reflects the typical average age within the tech industry (Statista, 2016). The different viewpoints of the various stakeholders helped to better analyse the correlation between Work-Life Balance, employee wellbeing and corporate performance. The questioning of different employees from varying positions helped the interviewer to better understand their motivations, expectations, past experiences and stress levels. Furthermore, it was interesting for the interviewer to gain an understanding of the different views, perceptions and personal importance of Work-Life Balance of the respondents and thus different results were identified through the interviews.

The following table provides general information about all respondents, including information about their job position, employer, work experience in the tech industry, age, relationship status, children and origin:

General Information	Interviewee 1	Interviewee 2	Interviewee 3	Interviewee 4	Interviewee 5	Interviewee 6	Interviewee 7	Interviewee 8	Interviewee 9	Interviewee 10
Age	26	28	25	50	25	29	27	36	36	34
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Female	Female	Male	Female	Female
Marital status	Single	In a relationship	In a relationship	Married	Single	Single	In a relationship	Single	Single	Single
Children	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Nationality	German	Dutch	Argentinian	French	French	Taiwanese	German	Irish	Romanian	Irish/American
Place of Work	LinkedIn	Salesforce	Zen3	Anonymous	Workday	Huawei	SAP	eBay	Facebook	LinkedIn
Occupation	Sales Development Specialist	Team Lead and Customer Success Manager	Ad Content Reviewer	Director for Central Europe	Corporate sales development representative	Personal Assistant of the CEO	Sales Development Representative	Performance Coach (Manager)	Production Engineer	Manager for Sales Development Team
Type of Employment	Full Time	Full Time	Part-Time	Full Time	Full Time	Full Time	Full Time	Full Time	Full Time	Full Time
Years of Work in the Tech Industry	10 months	3 years	6 months	24 years	2 years, 3 months	6 Months	2 years	8.5 years	6 years	Over 5.5 years

Table 8: Table of Interviewees (own illustration)

3.4.2 Access and Ethical Issues

Ethical issues exist in every type of research carried out. In the research process, a tension between the research objectives for generalizations to the benefit of others as well as the rights of participants to privacy is created. For this reason, the goal of ethics is to do good and avoid harm. Furthermore, by using appropriate ethical principles, the harm is possible to be prevented (Orb *et al.*, 2001). Therefore, the research will be conducted according to ethical standards in order to respect and protect the participants.

First of all, the researcher is required to guarantee that the respondents' rights are not violated in any way by the research. Furthermore, the researcher must conduct the research with the aim of keeping the possible harm for all people involved as low as possible (Orb *et al.*, 2001).

Secondly, the right to privacy and confidentiality must be insured by the researcher. This right should be invulnerable, in particular, if the respondents are employees who talk about their work life. For this reason, the researcher should assure the interviewee that everything is kept confidential and nothing is disclosed to the employer (Qu and Dumay, 2011).

Finally, before the interview is conducted, the participants will be informed about the topic of the interview and receive the Plain Language Statement and Informed Consent which is included in Appendix A and B. In these statements, they are informed that the interview will be digitally recorded, transcribed, and the entire data will remain confidential and subsequently stored by the researcher in a safe place to be used only for the purpose of this research. Besides, respondents may refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time. During the entire research, the author adheres to the code of ethics.

3.5 Approach to Data Analysis

The analysis of data is considered the most challenging and most important part of qualitative research, as it is a dynamic, intuitional as well as creative process based on inductive thinking, and theories. The analysis of the qualitative data aims to identify categories, relationships, and hypotheses informing respondents' perceptions concerning the world generally as well as the specific topic (Basit, 2003). The data collected through qualitative research must be accurately analysed and synthesized to obtain relevant data.

For this reason, creating transcripts as well as a coding framework was essential as it helped to transcribe, categorize and ultimately efficiently analyse the data. The researcher recorded the interviews and subsequently transcribed the collected data to be able to insert significant information into the coding framework. An example of a transcribed interview can be found in Appendix C.

The researcher will concentrate only on the relevant information and aspects that contribute to achieving the research objective. Due to this fact, only the important data of the primary research has been used for an extensive data analysis and the remaining data is either summarized or even completely excluded (Saldana, 2015).

The so-called coding used in this dissertation is a useful system during the analysis to obtain meaning from data (Basit, 2003).

The purpose of coding is to divide the data and assign it to categories which are then identified with a theme and help to find correlations, patterns and insights leading to an initial draft conclusion (Saldana, 2015).

The categories (codes) are tags/labels used to classify relevant, concluding information that has been compiled within the study (Basit, 2003). According to Saldana, some categories can have several subcategories. Finally, it is possible to summarize the categories into themes/concepts, which are then analysed by the researcher, and with the help of the results a theory or assertions can be formed (Saldana, 2015).

The illustration below shows the basic process of coding based on the ideal and streamlined scheme:

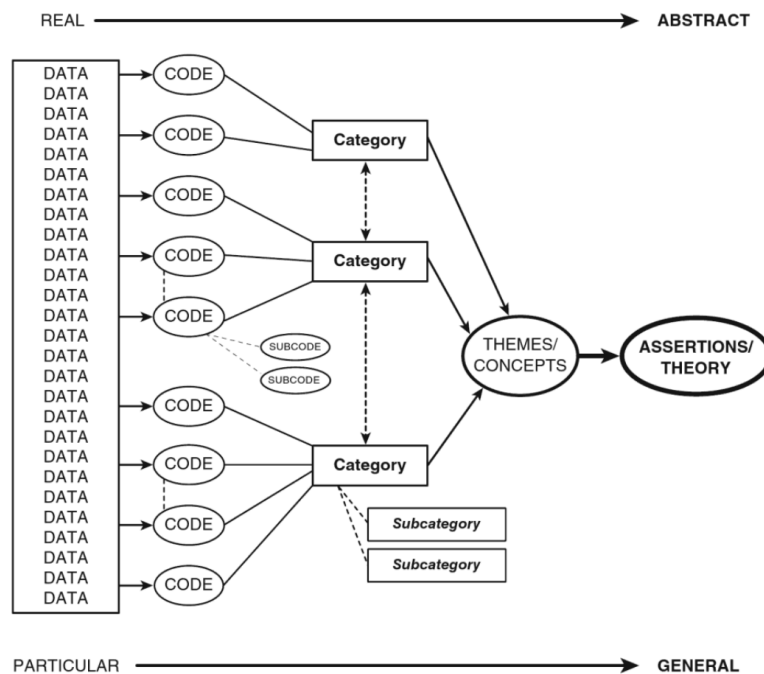


Figure 11: A streamlined codes-to-theory model for qualitative inquiry (Saldana, 2015)

Furthermore, the themes that have been developed will be compared with the theory of the literature review to obtain an overview of findings which are comparable to the work of earlier researchers, as well as findings resulting out of the researcher's study.

In this dissertation, the coding process started by transferring the transcribed interviews from Word into Excel and prepare the Excel document for coding.

The interviews took an average of 25 to 35 minutes and the transcription included approximately 4,000 words per interview. The next step was to code all 10 interviews in Excel and highlight keywords which were related to WLB benefits/policies, daily work, private life, stress, health, motivation etc., which showed more about individual perceptions and expectations related to Work-Life Balance.

After the keywords were determined, codes were created. The researcher identified 281 codes which were divided into 18 categories and these were then finally grouped into seven different themes. In order to maintain an overview of all codes, categories, themes as well as allocations in the interviews, the researcher created a coding framework, referred to as the "codebook".

The layout of the codebook contains different columns with five elements as well as the allocation to the interviews. The five elements include the theme, the category, the code (keywords), the frequency and the prime example determined based on the interview data. The codebook can be found in Appendix E. An excerpt from the codebook is presented below:

Theme	Category	Code (Key Words)	Frequency	Prime Example	Allocation Interview 1
Work-Life Balance	Coping with Stress/Pressure	Positive	10		
		Negative	4		
		Work Less	1		(Ehm) how do I cope I mean I try to since corona started I try to work less, which worked out good.
		Sleep	2		Usually I just try to get enough sleep. I think the best thing is sleep
		Go for Walks	1		I try to go for a short walk
		Talk to Family	1		talk to my family before I go to bed
		Eat healthy	2		try to eat healthy
		Meet people/friends not from work	2		During the weekend try to meet people not from work. Like try to meet people from college or somewhere else just to keep your mind off from work.
		Company takes care of you	2		
		Supportive Manager	1		

Table 9: Codebook (own illustration)

3.6 Conclusion

On the basis of the research onion according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019), the research methodology was developed in the chapters.

In this dissertation the researcher chose the interpretivism approach for the research philosophy. As part of this philosophy, an inductive approach was applied, as the researcher has identified the key categories throughout the data collection period. For the collection of primary data, 10 interviews were conducted. Moreover, a qualitative research method was chosen since the researcher aimed to obtain richer and a more holistic view of the Work-Life Balance situation in Tech Companies and how this influences the wellbeing of the employees as well as the performance of the company.

Throughout the data collection process, ethical standards were respected and interviewees were treated confidentially. To ensure this, the researcher informed the respondents beforehand about the research topic, the procedure as well as the recording of the interview. In exchange, the participants agreed to the interview terms and gave their consent.

The questions which were asked in the interviews were semi-structured and based on both the literature and the respondents' answers to achieve better findings. All interviews have been recorded as well as transcribed and the findings were then coded. Afterwards the codes were categorised to identify themes which were then analysed. In the following chapter the research findings are presented and discussed.

Chapter 4

4. Presentation and Discussion of the Findings

4.1 Overview

In the previous chapter, the decisions on research strategy and design were outlined and a detailed description of data collection was given. The data collected from interviews were edited and coded using a specific coding framework. A codebook was created by the researcher resulting from the coding process, which will help to present the findings in the following chapter.

The findings obtained by qualitative research are reviewed and presented in this chapter, which includes 10 interviews involving several employees working in different positions within Tech Companies in Dublin. In the course of this chapter, the findings addressing the research question as well as key elements leading to important insights are presented. The identified results contribute to a discussion with the reviewed literature and can provide complementary information to the existing literature.

In order to achieve this aim, the researcher will first explain in detail the themes resulting from the analysis based on the primary data. The research objective is then confronted with the findings of the interview data. In the end, the outcomes are compared and discussed with the reviewed literature.

4.2 Findings and Discussion

The analysis is based on the codebook developed beforehand and will be underlined with prime examples, which are important for the evaluation as well as the presentation process. The illustration below shows the coding process:

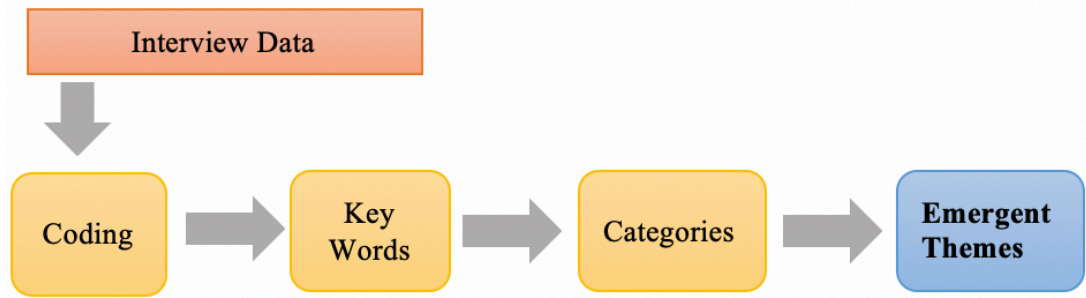


Figure 12: Coding Process (own illustration)

In the last step of the coding process, the findings from the interview data were divided into different themes and are initially explained in detail by the researcher in the following:

Theme	Description
Work	This theme contains categories such as job roles, day to day, working hours, and the main challenges in the specific job.
Tech Company	This topic provides insight into why people choose to work in the technology industry and how their corporate culture looks like.
Work-Life Balance	This topic includes understanding the concept of Work-Life Balance, people's actions, how employees deal with stress/pressure at work, what kind of Work-Life Balance programs/policies different companies might offer and whether employees feel that their lives are balanced. In addition, findings for the future of Work-Life Balance and recommendations for companies are discussed.
Employee Motivation	This theme deals with motivational factors for employees such as benefits and further career development.
Manager	This theme focuses on managers in technology companies and how they support their employees or whether they feel supported.
Technology	This theme focuses on how new technologies such as digitalization are affecting people's life.
Corona Pandemic	This theme deals with the current global pandemic and shows how the daily life and mental health of employees in the technology industry have changed.

Table 10: Themes created in codebook (own illustration)

4.2.1 Key Findings

The research objective of this exploratory study is to find out what experiences Irish technology workers have had in managing their Work-Life Balance. As mentioned earlier, the people interviewed work in various areas in different Tech Companies within Dublin: five people are working in Sales (three entry/midlevel employees and two managers), one Customer Experience Account Manager, one Team Lead and Customer Success Manager, one Content Reviewer, one Personal Assistant of the CEO and one Production Engineer.

Work

All 10 interviewees have a different daily work routine, with various tasks and some have targets/missions to fulfil in order to be successful in their jobs.

Working Hours:

Two people mentioned that they have fixed working hours while eight people stated that they have flexible working hours. Flexible working hours mean that they can start and finish their work whenever they want, as long as they do their tasks. Flexible working hours may sound really good as you can manage your own time, but one respondent mentioned a crucial point:

[...] I hope that they will stop doing the flexible working time/working hours it never pays off for the people working their ass off because if you have flexible hours you usually stay longer because you feel like you haven't done enough and there's no real hours where you can say ok I'm off now so I wouldn't like to have the flexible hours anymore. I am not getting paid more or get more holidays. (Interviewee 1)

In the literature, flexible working hours are always seen as a good policy because it helps to reduce the conflict between personal life and work as well as improves the wellbeing of employees (AlHazemi, 2016).

Based on this familiar knowledge through literature it must be said that Interviewee 1 delivers a convincing view that has never been considered like this before. Flexible working hours do not always have advantages, as you often automatically work longer since you think "I still have to finish my work". Moreover, you are neither paid for the overtime nor do you automatically get more days off for it and people tend to develop an imbalance in their work and life as they overwork themselves.

According to the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997, the maximum average working week should not exceed 48 hours (citizensinformation.ie, n.d.).

This statement leads to an interesting finding that almost all respondents at some point work more than the usual 8 hours per day and sometimes exceed the maximum 48 hours per week which is the legal working limit in Ireland.

The following diagram shows that 8 out of 10 interviewees work overtime.

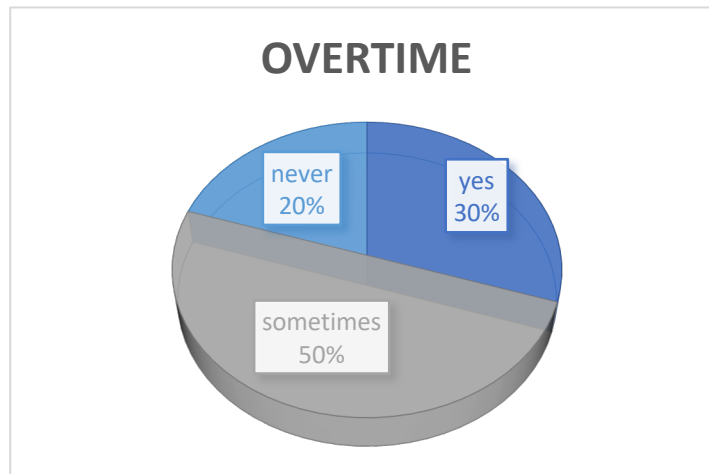


Figure 13: Overtime Diagram (own illustration)

Some interviewees also mentioned that they could work less on other days if they worked overtime. One respondent said:

[...] It is just sometimes you work overtime if there is a project due or there's an event or something. (Eh) but sometimes you work less. (Eh) because yes, sometimes it happens that you have to work a bit longer a day but then you can also leave again another day. Sometimes on Friday afternoon when I don't have much work left I just leave the office earlier for example. (Interviewee 2)

Furthermore, an interesting aspect that emerged out of the interviews is the fact that employees are not forced by the company to work overtime but do so by choice in order to fulfil their tasks. One respondent for example said:

[...] (Eh) but in the end of the day like nobody is going to tell you to work later or to do more stuff or anything it's really like you do handle your stuff and I know on my side there's some days where I really want to end up something today and I can end up staying 2 hours more but (eh) which is funny maybe after an hour if someone is leaving and is already leaving late they probably going to show up at your desk like: "what are you doing here? Why are you still here like?" (Interviewee 5)

This again supports the above-mentioned statement from Interviewee 1 that employees will stay longer if you have flexible working hours because nobody controls you. Ultimately, all that matters to the company is that you have finished your work accurately.

Moreover, working on weekends is not necessarily a rarity for employees in the technology sector, as you can see from the diagram below:



Figure 14: Work at Weekends Diagram (own illustration)

All the above statements show that it is in line with the theory in the literature that Ireland has long average working hours and employees can work 7 days a week (James, 2011).

Another interesting statement according to the working hours was mentioned by Interviewee 4:

[...] I read that there's kind of a ratio in mind that if you start to work significant overtime including the weekend for more than 3-4 weeks, then this is just mentally dangerous. Mentally in terms of just to prevent you know burnout. And burnout that's extremely multifactorial and complex but that's really when you have no more difference between personal/private life etc.

The data from this interviewee indicated that overtime or work at weekends can negatively affect your mental health and in the worst-case lead to burnout. This statement matches the data given in the literature, which also stated that stress, long working hours, as well as no free time, could lead to poorer mental health and burnout.

Main Challenges

Due to the fact that the interviewees have various roles and work in different companies, it was interesting to find out what they see as the biggest challenge in their profession and if there are any similarities. Interview data from people working in sales show that they all have the same opinion that the main challenge for them is to achieve their targets and that they are not able to disconnect properly from work as they are constantly thinking about how they can reach their targets. Prime Examples for interviewees responses are:

[...]I'd say it's the target. How can I reach them, what can I do better, what can I do next to reach my target, so it was not easy for me to switch off from work and (ehm) yeah the target is something which put pressure on you definitely. I mean I can just talk about myself but I have work constantly on my mind because you can never really disconnect because it's like you think about ok it's half of the. (Interviewee 1)

[...] Now I put so much effort and so much work but if the customer, the element isn't you know the next step isn't happening which isn't in my control then it doesn't matter how much I work it affects my performance. Because I'm measured on targets. I take the pressure from work home. (Interviewee 7)

From these two interview responses, it can be seen that the pressure in sales is very high and that they even "take work home with them", which means that they can never really disconnect from work. This again confirms theory from the literature, where it is mentioned that people who work in sales could work 24/7. This is also confirmed by an interviewee who does not work in sales himself but noticed it from his colleagues:

[...] (Eh) so the pressure for me is ok it's not too bad and it's not too less. It's a healthy balance as I'm not directly in sales. In sales, the pressure is higher but the rewards are also higher. Sales can be exciting but it can also be more challenging. (Interviewee 2)

Another noteworthy point in terms of challenges and targets was made by Interviewee 8 (Manager):

[...](Ehm) people's behaviours (hahaha). When you work with so many people so, I'm directly responsible for 17 people but we're also part of a department of about 80 people (ehm) and sometimes we don't always get the chance to be part of the hiring process. Most of the time we are but sometimes when you have some people that aren't right for the job, come in and trying to get them to manage their work and manage their performance when they're not given the same commitment themselves to improve those numbers (targets) that's the biggest challenge.

This statement shows that not all employees are as hard-working and committed as the two respondents before to fulfil their work tasks.

On the other hand, there are employees who are not as committed to putting effort into work. This makes it difficult for the manager to manage this type of employee in such a way that they can reach their targets because managers are also measured by the performance of their team and if their team performs poorly, this can negatively affect the manager, which can also be a stress factor.

A further challenge that was mentioned by interviewees was the fact, that the tech industry is fast-paced and constantly changing. This means that employees need to be flexible and willing to adapt to new changes in order to stay up-to-date and succeed in this rapidly transforming environment.

[...]You have to be quite flexible. We are really flexible. (Eh) strategies can change, (eh) any year, teams can change. For example, when I started at company XY 3 years ago. The job I applied for at company XY, the job I ended in, it did not exist 5 years ago. So, this shows how quickly companies can change, and jobs become available, but they can also disappear or they change your jobs slightly (ehm) yeah you have to be flexible. So, I would say that's the main challenge. (Interviewee 2)

[...]I have to get to update myself with so many things from Microsoft which they are changing every single time. We have several trainings in our company, we are getting in touch with Microsoft every single moment a day. (Interviewee 3)

The statement that the tech industry is fast-moving and constantly changing is consistent with the reviewed theory of the literature. It also mentions that companies and employees need to adapt to rapid change to stay successful in this industry.

Tech Company

Why tech?

The main question the researcher asked the respondents were the reasons why they chose to work in the technology industry. The collected interview data was partly differing, but also often identical. Five interviewees mentioned that it was just a coincidence that they started working in Tech. Two interviewees decided to apply to Tech because it was recommended to them by friends.

And two other interviewees just “fall in love” with Tech as they said:

[...] It was tricky I just fell in love with the subject. (Interviewee 9)

[...] So, I originally worked as a recruitment consultant. So, I have been recruiting for IT people and that was the first time that I actually fell in love with tech. (Interviewee 10)

Some of the interviewees mentioned that Dublin is a tech city and that it gives them the opportunity to gain international experience. They also mentioned that there are several opportunities for international professionals in Dublin, especially in the technology industry.

[...] I think in Dublin, it's a great opportunity to start working at a Tech Company because (ehm) most of the international companies are here in Dublin. They are sometimes or always I say, looking for people (ehm) from abroad, you know. And they are looking for people who know different languages. It was perfect for me because they were looking for a person that speaks Spanish and also has a great background, great degrees as I have. I think and thought that it was a great opportunity to start to get international experience. (Interviewee 3)

[...] But (eh) it's way more because in Dublin you have so much opportunity for tech that I really went for tech but I was not really looking for tech specifically when (eh) going to Ireland. There is a lot of job in Ireland for (eh) a lot of (eh) speakers that would be from Europe because we're covering our own markets and so because of that like (eh) when I moved to Ireland I mainly looked for companies that are looking for French speakers. (Interviewee 5)

The argument that Dublin is a tech city providing many opportunities for international people is also consistent with the literature as this can be found in several internet articles.

Another interesting point is that some respondents mentioned that tech is the future. For them, tech is fast-paced, changing, interesting, exciting, and challenging.

[...]And (eh) I knew, I mean tech is your future right, tech is (eh) the world is, (eh) almost all companies are becoming tech. Before I joined company XY I was working at Adidas (eh) a sports company and there were also slowly moving, becoming a tech company. It's mainly because of course they still have their shops right. They still have their physical shops in the city centres (eh) but nowadays their webshop (eh) has become their most successful shop out there. (Eh) so most of their sales they generate through their webshop, so that is why they become a tech company and why yeah everything is becoming more e-commerce driven and omnichannel as they call it (eh) so yeah you see it in everything. (Eh), less focus on their physical stores and more focus on their applications and on their website. So even you weren't in a tech company before in the future all companies will be tech companies. In my opinion, the industry to be in and it's really exciting, it's really fast-paced and it's really interesting. (Interviewee 2)

[...] Just having the opportunity of more of a future. I think that is what encouraged me to work in tech. I mean look at COVID right now a lot of industries are heavily, negatively impacted by it. And where is tech I'd say because it's so technology advantaged organization it's definitely more profiting from it. You know, an industry that is up and coming and there is so many like changes and it's relevant, it's important and it's growing. (Interviewee 7)

[...] Technology for me it's so ever-changing, it's so innovative. (Interviewee 10)

Moreover, the data from the interviews is in line with the data of the reviewed literature. There it was also mentioned that new technologies are emerging, they are changing the way organisations create and perceive value, the ways and places where we work, and the interactions as well as communications between us (Cascio and Montealegre, 2016). Also, it becomes evident that even companies who are actually not a technology business in nature are more and more transforming into one with new strategies and digitalised concepts.

Work Culture

A further point in favour of the tech industry is the work culture. 9 out of 10 people interviewed described a great corporate culture and that they had never experienced this before in any other industry. Moreover, some of the interviewees even mention that they love their environment as they grow and develop not only in their work but also as human beings because the culture is so diverse.

[...]The culture in company XY is actually good. (Ehm) yeah but the culture, in general, is great we've got a lot of diversity (ehm) it says members first and it feels like it is but for me it's just I like the culture.

They do have a lot of after work events in the teams like a team night out planned where you could do something like drink and draw or whatever. And (ehm) there are also some Christmas Party, the Sales Kick off or quarterly parties, so there's lots of things you can do. (Interviewee 1)

[...]In general, the work environment is really great like the colleagues are amazing, everyone is young, from different backgrounds and it's most likely like back in school and university and so, the work environment and the friendliness is definitely great I'd say. (Interviewee 7)

[...] (Eh) the work culture is very diverse, it's open, it's very very good, yeah it's probably the best I've ever experienced. So, for me, I really love my environment because (ehm) I'm not growing as a software engineer but I'm growing as a human being as well. (Interviewee 9)

This statement shows that the respondents are generally happy and satisfied with the working environment that Tech Companies offer them. Furthermore, these statements are similar to the theory mentioned in the literature, as it also states that it contributes to the wellbeing of employees if they work in a great working environment, as it means that they actually enjoy going to workplace.

Another noteworthy aspect is that one respondent stated that in addition to all the events/team nights that companies offer, mental health also plays an important role in their work culture:

[...] Talking about mental health is not tabu in company XY where is in other companies it is. You know, people say it's not tabu but if you tell people: I have anxiety or I'm feeling depressed or you know I have a lot going on. Sometimes they would look at you more negatively. They won't mean to but sometimes it can be more biased towards you. Whereas in company XY people are a lot more open about talking about what they're going through which is quite nice and refreshing. (Interviewee 10)

This shows that companies today are finally paying more and more attention to the fact of mental health and the problems faced by individuals and taking them more seriously by trying to help their employees and lead them to a healthy, happier life. Because happy and satisfied employees will work harder and do their best to make the company successful.

This assertion was also mentioned by a respondent who says that employees are valuable assets:

[...] Employees are an asset, you know. You have to do everything for the employees to be happy because if I am happy working I will do things better. So, if I do things better the company will get more money, we will make more money. We will be more successful. If I'm successful the company will be successful. If I'm pissed or so annoyed the company will feel that. Because they will feel the impact on that. (Interviewee 3)

The statement that employees are valuable resources has also been previously explained and justified with the Research-Based-View in the literature review. According to Barney, the Research-Based View states that resources that are scarce, precious, and inimitable, as well as non-substitutable, have the potential to be sources of sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). This supports the statement of Interviewee 4 that companies should attach more importance to their employees as they are valuable resources and can generate a competitive advantage. For this reason, companies should provide the best possible efforts to satisfy the needs of their employees in order to achieve long-term business success.

Work-Life Balance

Work-Life Balance is the main term the whole exploratory study is about.

This theme covers categories like: the understanding of the term Work-Life Balance, Actions, Coping with Stress/Pressure, Recommendations for companies as well as the future of Work-Life Balance.

Starting off, the researcher asked the interviewees if they know Work-Life Balance and what they understand by it. All 10 interviewees indicated that they were familiar with the term Work-Life Balance. The interesting aspect was the perception and understanding of what each individual has of Work-Life Balance.

The typical answers were:

[...] (Ehm) like, you can still do your work then but you still have your own life. For example, the work won't influence your own life that much like you can still enjoy your weekends or dinner time or something. Don't over work. But to me it means having a healthy amount of work while still maintaining my private life.

Those answers are similar to how Work-Life Balance is described in most of the literature. However, there were also answers that are not mentioned in the typical literature such as:

[...] So, I guess Work-Life Balance means you can actually have a life and you can also work at the same time. So, a lot of people you know: you have people who live to work and you have people who work to live you know. So, it's having the balance between that."

Another respondent added:

[...] (Ehm), I would say what is tricky with Work-Life Balance it's for me first about ourselves. Like what I consider Work-Life Balance would be different from what you consider Work-Life Balance. (Ehm) on my site I don't really consider that it's really about like the amount of time you can spent at work but way more about the value you can get from it. So, for example I know at company XY just because like there is a lot of thing is kind of (eh) if tomorrow you find a tool your using, an aspect you're doing or anything you want, improve it. So, for me the Work-Life Balance it's a lot about this aspect, it's between what I give and what I receive. It's a balance. For me Work-Life Balance it's so personal cause you could have some people that don't mind working 10 hours in a row because whenever they take some days off like they can do crazy stuff and they really release the pressure or anything and on the other site you can have people working only 6 hours a day and still feel like they're working too much and then it also depend on how you, cause like it's kind of (eh) work hard, party harder. Work-Life Balance is the same. (Interviewee 5)

Both respondents mentioned the fact that Work-Life Balance is what each individual feel and perceives personally and what their attitude towards work is. Interviewee 10 had a great statement, which was to the point and was indeed true: "You have people who live to work and you have people who work to live". Some people work because they love to work and are motivated, and others work just to get money in order to survive. This statement can be understood with Maslow's motivation theory. There, the people who work to live would be on the level of "basic needs". Since they see work solely as satisfying their basic needs. With Maslow's adapted pyramid it can be explained even better:

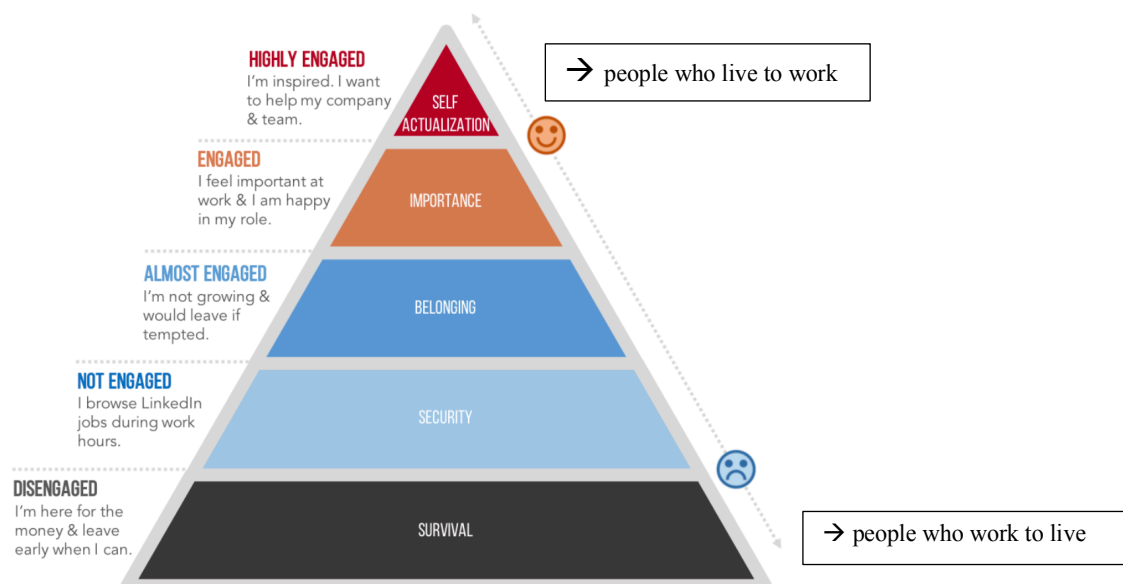


Figure 15: Adapted Pyramid for Employee Engagement
<https://www.cmo.com/opinion/articles/2018/3/15/mapping-maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-to-employee-advocacy.html#gs.b2tpmx> (Accessed 06.18.2020)

In this figure from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, it can be seen that the people who work to live are on the "survival level" and disengaged, and on the other hand, the people who live to work are on the "self-actualization level" and highly engaged.

A further interesting comment from one interviewee was that he says that with the new technologies it is more difficult to have a Work-Life Balance because we are overconnected.

[...] And (eh) what I understand is that more and more with the new technologies like we are doing right now I'm working from home. And (eh) this is more and more difficult with all the new technologies you know the smartphone, the laptop. We are overconnected. So, the clear limit, there is no more line between private life and professional life. (Interviewee 4)

What the interviewee mentioned is further discussed under the theme **Technology**.

Another finding that emerged from the interview data and was not mentioned in the literature was that work and private life can merge in a positive way and do not always have to merge negatively as stated in most of the literature. Due to the fact that most of the Tech Companies offer a variety of company or team events which can lead to employees becoming friends. One respondent said:

[...] Sometimes there in a twin like co-workers become friends or like we might have work events during the evening they don't really feel necessarily like work events but more like a fun event with friends.

An interesting point which Interviewee 10 mentioned was that she thinks the Work-Life Balance in Europe is much better than in America. She works for an American company but they work according to European laws.

[...] So, you know personally for me like as I said to you earlier I'm Irish/American. So, I have an Irish passport and I have an American passport and one of the big reasons that I'm not working in America is because they don't really have a Work-Life Balance there. They don't really (ehm) it's not something that is (eh) positive. You know (ehm) it's frowned upon if you take a lot of annual leave, they work extremely hard within the business and that's ok for some people but I think the European way of working is much more aligned towards what I would like in my life i.e. an actual Work-Life Balance.

This shows the fact that while employees working in Europe could actually have a Work-Life Balance, they do not always take advantage of this opportunity, and no matter what companies offer them as support, they always find something they are not satisfied with, even if they are better off than other workers working for the same company, but on a different continent (America versus Europe), where there are different working conditions that make it much more difficult to have a Work-Life Balance.

Actions

After asking the interviewees what they understand by Work-Life Balance, the researcher wanted to figure out whether they actually succeed in achieving a balance between professional and private life. The following diagram shows that it is 50/50:



Figure 16: Work and Life balanced Diagram (own illustration)

The diagram reveals that in theory, everyone knows what Work-Life Balance means, but not everyone can implement it in practice as well as they might like.

One respondent mentioned:

[...] (Ehm), it has been difficult to manage free time to be honest. Usually, the time when I spent time with my friends or family was on the weekends but even though we have off on the weekends I used to work a few days on the weekends but so when I saw my friends was basically on the weekend or late in the evening. And I did sport a lot before but I stopped it when I started at company XY.

This statement confirms the theory stated in the literature, saying that overwork results in a lack of private life.

Another interviewee on the other hand, stated that they are able to manage their free time as it is about planning in advance and organizing your time:

[...] I literally just work the hours that I'm assigned. So, I can plan everything around it, and should there be a day where I might have to do a late shift or the weekend. I know well in advance. So, I can always make plans outside of that and at the same time should something like a surprise happen in (ehm) in my life for getting something done. (Interviewee 8)

[...] I'm planning things like hell. I have a specific methodology for that because that's (eh). I read some books etc. so I have some methodology for that I'm planning everything in my agenda. That's what I told you from the beginning. I don't like to have (eh) all the details in mind. I'm not made for that, I know it. So, I need to write things and to block slot times to do everything. And that's easier in my agenda to move some of the task that are not critical for tomorrow and to

prioritize this is extremely good. Point 1: planning, planning, planning everything, and (eh) have my e-mail box almost empty (eh) every Friday evening. Sometimes it works, sometimes not but I have some tip and tricks with outlook where I cannot forget any follow-up and have a lot of, I mean I'm planning everything. (Interviewee 4)

These statements make it clear that although people have a lot of work, as mentioned above, it depends on a person's personality and abilities whether someone is able to organize their time well and plan everything so that they have enough free time. This in turn has never been mentioned in the literature that planning and organizing time is the key to a better balance in life.

Some interviewees mentioned that they like to do sports to clear their minds and take a break from work. To achieve a healthy Work-Life Balance you have to put effort into it as there are always phases in life where your Work-Life Balance will not be that good:

[...](Ehm) yeah, because I think I put in the effort to make it balanced. So, there's definitely times where it's not as balanced right. So, like I don't think it can be balanced every week and every day of the month but (ehm) I think because sometimes you have projects or you have certain deadlines where you just have to put in more work or more effort. But if you do that I think then you need to make the conscious effort to maybe the next week take it a little bit easier and make sure to also create some downtime and create some time for yourself and create some creativity time and I think another thing that's big for me is that I really make sure to plan my time for sports and planning time for my hobbies. And then also you know just leave the office at 7 no matter what I still have to do and go to my training. (Eh) and that I don't know I leave at 5 so I have a date night with my boyfriend. So, that you know I don't put work first all the time. (Interviewee 7)

Moreover, it is important that as an individual you should not always put work first and think more about what is good for you. Interviewee 7 added a good statement as she said that a company is not responsible for your Work-Life Balance. Companies might offer events like mental health days etc. but in the end, it is your own decision if you participate or not. You as an individual have it in your hands whether you are working towards a healthy balance between work and private life:

[...] (Ehm) I think personally at the end of the day there is definitely things that company can do to encourage a good Work-Life Balance but at the end of the day it's up to the employees up to us to every individual to make sure that you know we're happy and that our mental health is ok and that we find a balance between the two. And if we do find ourselves imbalanced for too long and if we do find ourselves in being really unhappy then it's up to us you know to make changes accordingly. (Ehm) so, I definitely realize that you know I'm in charge of that and that's why I've you know really focused especially since Corona on making sure

that I leave early and that I just try to work more efficiently to work more in working hours. (Interviewee 7)

The statement gives a good point of view, which the researcher agrees with. This has not been considered in this way in the literature. It always says that companies are responsible for ensuring that their employees have a good balance in their lives and they should offer many WLB policies/benefits to make this possible.

Since COVID some of the interviewees feel that their life is getting imbalanced. One good example of an interviewee was:

[...]During COVID because my environment has become like, my living room has become my living room, my gym, my workspace, and everything. You're always like ok I'm going to respond to this, it can't wait. When I do that I am constantly engaged. Like sometimes I take things out of my free time like for instance, I work on this thing which no one asked me to do it. Not that you're expected to do it but I just chose to do it (ehm) but I don't think that I managed to disengage in the past 3 months completely. (Eh) no, I'm not very good in disengaging. (Ehm) although I do like to get to do some activities but I don't get to fully disengage. And also having a work phone right no ditching my personal phone for my work phone and combine everything together. When I see a notification or something because we also have people in the US or whatever right. (Eh) when I see something is posted or someone texted. Although they don't expect me to look at it, you just look at it because you'll like ah, if I look at it now I don't have to look at it tomorrow you know. And it's this trap because you fall into this habit oh I'm going to check and check but if you check it you're being engaged right. So, this is where my lack of Work-Life Balance comes from. (Interviewee 8)

This statement supports again what Interviewee 7 just mentioned, namely you as an individual are in charge of your wellbeing and you decide what you are doing. As Interviewee 9 said "I take things out of my free time for instance I work on this thing no one asked me to do it." This shows that no one in the company told her to do extra work, but she herself decides to do it and has an unbalanced Work-Life Balance as a result. This finding indicates that companies are not always responsible for the poor Work-Life Balance of their employees or for stress, but that employees actually put themselves in this position.

Coping with Stress/Pressure

According to the data gathered from interviews most of the respondents indicated that sufficient sleep, healthy eating, exercise, meeting, or talking to friends/family are important for them to cope with stress or pressure at work.

One respondent mentioned that it is a constant effort to have a healthy balance in life and sometimes you will bring the emotions from work back to your home as it is difficult to always maintain the balance since we are humans and not robots:

[...] And so, yeah it takes conscious effort but sometimes it's really hard to separate the two right. I remember when it wasn't going well in my role and when it just I was putting in all the effort and I didn't get to see any of the returns. Then really it was effort and consciously trying to shut off.

It was tough because you know we are humans and it's connected you know like your private life and your work life and your emotions and you're not just a robot. So, you bring your private emotions into work and your work emotions into your private life. So, when it's tough at work it's it can also be tough at home. (Interviewee 7)

Moreover, one manager made a good statement by saying that it is important that people understand that stress can be part of work and that you just have to accept this and find a way to overcome it with positive thoughts:

[...] I suppose just I don't know it's supposed to be just the understanding that it's part of the job and it's always going to happen. So, I think it's just the acceptance that is part of human nature that you're going to experience those challenges and then being confident within the processes of the company. (Interviewee 8)

Both statements have a truth in them because every profession has its ups and downs as well as stressful times. It is up to the individual to understand this first, and then to strive for a healthy balance in life. Once again, this fact is not mentioned in the reviewed theory of the literature.

Another manager added to this statement that you have to find “a tribe for your energy” if you want to move to the management level as you give so much energy for your team:

[...] (Ehm), I think as well it's really important, so say for instance when you move into management kind of your job is very much to support (ehm) and it takes a lot of energy to support a team. So, what I learned when I got into management was like that I needed my own kind of tribe to support me as well and to give me energy. Because I was giving so much energy to my team that I wasn't getting any energy back and I was becoming very, very drained. (Interviewee 10)

Besides, one interviewee made an interesting point by saying that stress is very personal and a feeling one experiences as an individual or perhaps even creates oneself:

[...] (Ehm) but usually, so it depends what you count as stress right. Because stress can be very personal. (Eh) so for me I stress about something that I realize I can overthink things right. So, this is where stress comes from like you have a thought and you just follow the path, following the thoughts and create a story around it that doesn't even exist right. (Interviewee 9)

This statement puts it in a nutshell, because as the interviewee said, stress is something personal. Everyone feels different situations in different ways. For one person it is stress and for another it is "normal". A lot depends on personal perception and how one deals with stress in order not to mentally break down.

Recommendations for companies

To find out what the respondents would like their employer to do to help them achieve a better Work-Life Balance, the researcher asked what their recommendations to their company were.

Four respondents stated that they are satisfied with everything their company has done so far and that they have nothing to complain about.

Two Interviewees mentioned the targets in their job and they wish that the company put realistic achievable targets in order to have less pressure:

[...] It's a sales job and everybody who does a sales job knows that there's a target and there's pressure. What I wish they would do is that they would lower our targets like a little bit more realistic. I know it's sales and I know everything is booming and I know they expect us to overperform but it's just too much and I wish that they would see that especially during Corona. I think that they should notice that the performance we did before is not realistic now. (Interviewee 1)

Another respondent added:

[...] Some people their targets have remained the same even though their capacity has reduced. So, they still have to hit the same target even though they have to look after their children and their capacity has been reduced. So, they found this really unfair. (Interviewee 2)

Based on the interview data, it emerged that some respondents are not satisfied with their company's financial support if they have to work from their homes until the end of the year. One respondent said:

[...]And I think if you can't do the working remote than they should at least be benefits towards food more because that is what we currently have to pay for by ourselves. And (ehm) we've got a little bit of a budget to set up a home office but it really isn't enough to truly set up a working space. (Interviewee 7)

In addition, respondent 7 added that she wanted companies to be more flexible in terms of the location from which you work, saying:

[...] (Eh) another thing is if they expect us to stay home until the end of the year at least (ehm) they should also expect us to be able to work more remotely from other countries. I know due to tax reasons it's a little bit limited but I believe there is a way to work around it because we find ourselves as we always say in unprecedented times. And I think if you're really want to support the mental health and the talent you have that is just something you need to start with. Because all these benefits that we use to have are gone now right.

With this statement Interviewee 7 stated a good point saying that it would help employee's wellbeing if they would have the choice to work from everywhere they want to and be close to their loved ones.

Two other interviewees had wishes they know that the company cannot do anything about. One for example mentioned:

[...]I mean, personally I would love to have a 4-day working week. I feel like I could definitely get as much as I need to get into my job in 4 days rather than 5. (Ehm) the 4 days would be packed but it would definitely I mean I feel like especially working from home, being on Zoom all the time, 5 days is a lot. But I don't think it's anything that our companies necessarily going to do anything about.

Despite the fact that the company would probably not reduce the working time from 5 to 4 days, this would not be a bad consideration as employees would have 4 hard, long working days but also 3 days more free time.

Finally, the last comment that made a good point was that Interviewee 4 stated:

[...]Maybe just one comment is that sometimes some companies think yeah we are taking care of our employee because we have a I don't know a health program and sometimes this is a bit kind of false argument just this is much more an umbrella "ah we are doing something.

Both the companies and the reviewed literature always point out that when companies offer Work-Life Balance programs to their employees, it works well for their wellbeing. But ultimately, it is only a protection for companies to be able to say that they offer something to help their employees. In the end, it is just a matter of offering something, but of constantly working on it, analysing and improving it and encouraging employees to use it.

Future of WLB

Another interesting finding from the interview data was to identify what the respondents think might change in terms of Work-Life Balance in the future.

Seven out of ten respondents mentioned that they think the home office will remain and that employees can decide whether they want to work from home or the office. One interviewee added that she thinks that people are less willing to move to Ireland and would like to do the job from their home country:

[...]I guess what going to happen is that a lot of people have moved to Ireland because of work and because of company XY. (Ehm) and this isn't something that they necessarily wanting to do if they're working from home. They're not going to want to leave their home countries, they going to want to stay in their home countries. (Interviewee 10)

Moreover, Interviewee 10 added that technology companies should also consider hiring people as "remote workers" from different countries around the world, as there are many hidden talents and they are often unwilling to move away from their home country.

[...]So, I think tech companies really need to look at (ehm) they really need to look at hiring more remote workers. And people who are (eh) in different countries because there is a wealth of talent across Europe and (ehm) people maybe don't want to move to Ireland because it rains and it's windy and it's really expensive you know. So, I think that's definitely something we could tap into.

The statement from Interviewee 10 has a good point, because companies could benefit from the best talents in the world if they give them the chance to work from their home country. This could not only lead to improved corporate performance, but also to happier and more satisfied employees with fewer mental problems as they do not have to leave their homes and families.

Another important aspect was mentioned by a Manager, which points to generational change and that companies have to adapt to that:

[...]And I know that there is some company that may die. Irrespectively of their business health, of the good products that they have but the new talents (ehm) are looking for something different from just the pure profit or financial pressure every month or to have a boss that is too directive or intrusive etc. (Interviewee 4)

This coming generational change was also mentioned earlier in the literature review and that companies must keep an eye on this. Due to the fact that the current generation entering the world of work has different needs than previous generations. Companies must change their strategy and adapt it to the future generation to continue being successful.

One manager mentioned another relevant aspect indicating that companies need to monitor the mental health of their employees more closely and encourage them more to do something for their wellbeing to prevent diseases such as burnout:

[...]As I mentioned earlier throughout our conversation it's me having to actively look for my tribe, having to actively go for a walk, having to actively so, there isn't really like a mandate within company XY saying right: "Everybody, we going to have a no meeting Wednesday." You know, where nobody is going to have meetings if they don't want to have that everybody is just going to be do their own work, their admin, their calls whatever. You know (ehm) or this time every day or half day. But I think it need to come more from companies, they need to mandate this more because I may have the mindset to actually do these things myself. But a lot of people don't and there is going to be a quite a large number of people who are getting burned out very, very quickly within this instance. There are not taking care of their mental health and maybe they don't know how to do it. So, I think companies have to actually mandate these things and that's what I think we need to do. (Interviewee 10)

With this statement, the manager addresses exactly the point that is always forgotten in the literature. There, it is always mentioned how great WLB benefits are for employees and the companies should offer it. However, many organizations do offer it but employees are sometimes unable to take advantage of it or do not know how to allocate their time to participate in events which is why companies should more encourage and demand their employees to take action for their mental health.

Employee Motivation

As already mentioned in the literature review, it is important as a company to motivate its employees in order to be successful in the long-term. Each employee has different motivational factors that organizations and managers need to understand to ultimately build a positive relationship with employees and work towards the success of the company (Lee and Raschke, 2016). Interview Data showed that the employees are motivated through Career Progression/Promotion as well as Benefits that companies offer them.

Career Progression/Promotion

Four interviewees mentioned that it is easy to get a promotion if you fulfil all requirements and positions are open:

[...]So, yeah, I would say probably you can easily be promoted if there's something open and if you already proved that you can do your job.
(Interviewee 5)

[...] (Ehm), and once their able to get that across that they're the right fit and they worked hard for it and that they're good performer well than it's quite easy.
(Interviewee 8)

Furthermore, one interviewee added:

[...] Well, I'd say in sales if you reach your targets you're almost automatically (ehm) promoted into another position or next level, next step or next role position. But if you do not meet your targets it's not easy. I think that with (ehm) progressing into a next role, there's always condition which you have to meet and if you don't it's not easy.

On the other hand, some interviewees said it is not easy to get a promotion even though you worked hard to fulfil the requirements.

[...]I would say it's not easy. Now even though you fulfil all the requirements your progression is just being hold and you're not even supported in any other ways. So, there's definitely a big gap and people have started to leave the company because of it.

This finding confirms the information found in the literature that it is important to motivate and support your employees, otherwise if they are dissatisfied and have no perspective for future career progression they will leave the company.

Benefits

A further motivational factor for employees is the benefits offered by companies 9/10 people only made positive comments about all the benefits they receive from their company. One interviewee said:

[...] I did apply because of the benefits because I knew that they were great.
(Interviewee 1)

Some of the Tech Companies offer their employees either free food/snacks or meal discounts. In addition, most companies offer the option of "perk up", which means that they can bill things through the company. Some companies even offer "educational payment", which encourages employees to learn new skills such as a language. Moreover, most companies cover a part of the health insurance. A lot of the Tech Companies also offer a free gym for their employees.

Some examples of interviewees answers were:

[...] We've got benefits in terms of we got free food. There's a barista at the top. We have a gym. (Ehm) you can perk up staff.
(Interviewee 1)

[...] (Ehm) we have education benefits. So, we have €5000 a year that we can spend on education. So, this can be from any kind of course that you want from language courses to courses (eh) at universities to anything you want to do (eh) then we have a bunch more. Also, health insurance partly covered, (eh) dentist insurance that partly cover, (eh) I think those are the main things, the most important things. They have small things as well for example they pay for your glasses. I needed new glasses (eh) last month and company XY paid for them.
(Interviewee 2)

One interviewee added an interesting fact that when you are hired through an agency, you do not receive all benefits such as for example health insurance from the company, which means you have to be able to take care for yourself. Moreover, she added that only the employees who have signed directly with the company will receive it.

[...] But I don't get health insurance or anything because for those people who officially signed the contract with the company they do. But we are from the agency so we don't.

WLB Policies/Benefits

In addition to the benefits just mentioned, most of the Tech Companies offer their employees the so-called WLB Benefits/Policies. Based on the interview data, it appeared that companies offer: maternity/paternity leave (Interviewee 1/9), flexible working hours (Interviewee 1/2/5/7/10), sports courses (Interviewee 1/10), financial support for elderly care/children (Interviewee 1/2/7/8), half day work for parents (Interviewee 1), wellness days (Interviewee 1/2/5/7/8), mental health events (Interviewee 1/6/9/10), voluntary days (Interviewee 2), meditation room at the office (Interviewee 2), enough holidays (Interviewee 2/10), working from home pre COVID (Interviewee 2/9), employees with just a home office contract (Interviewee 2), WLB surveys (Interviewee 4/5), meetings/webinars (Interviewee 1/4/5), general support from the company (Interviewee 4/5/8/10) and sabbatical every five years (Interviewee 8).

One interviewee stated that since COVID all sports courses are online, because their company attaches great importance to a healthy body and a healthy mind of their employees:

[...]So, there's like pilates, yoga. So, I think healthy body and healthy mind is also a big value of company XY as well and that was something that they were very keen for us to continue. So, even as we work remotely we also have access to life virtual (eh)workouts. So, like all throughout the week there's strengths and fitness and there's pilates, there's yoga, there's lots of different things. (Ehm) because they believe that we need to also taking care of our bodies as well. (Interviewee 10)

This shows that companies are trying to support their employees in this difficult time, as much as possible, to have a healthy body and mind. The same problem arises here again that companies offer such courses, but the question is how many employees take advantage of these courses realize how important it can be as a mental balance.

Another Interviewee mentioned that in order to support employees with children or elderly his company offers home office contracts which makes it easier for them to plan their day and take care of their responsibilities:

[...]We also have people who are on a home office contract which basically means that they are always work from home, they never go into the office. And this is pre COVID so that makes it much easier for parents to look after your children. (Interviewee 2)

Some of the companies started to care more about the mental health of their employees since they are all in home office. The companies are doing surveys to find out how their employees are feeling about a certain topic and what their needs are. One example mentioned by an interviewee was:

[...]I know our company we're having each Friday we're having a survey. So, it can be in different topics. So, those days it's also about like: "do you feel comfortable working from home or working from the office, you want to go back? Would you be more interesting to go but only 2 days a week?" and like every week they're asking questions about how we feel about how comfortable we feel with our managers. Do we feel like (eh) we're getting enough feedback? Do we feel like we would like to be able to give more feedback or it can be really many areas. And it's (eh) really important in my company. (Interviewee 5)

Offering all the great WLB benefits does not always contribute to good mental health of employees, as one interviewee made an interesting point by saying that the company offers a lot of events for the mental health and wellbeing of employees, but she does not have the time to go there because she works so much:

[...]They have lots of mental health events. Like they have, but the problem is for me in my position I don't have the time to go and see those events. (Interviewee 1)

This statement shows again the fact that even if a company offers all the great benefits to support the mental health and wellbeing of its employees, if you as an individual feel that you are so busy at work that you cannot use or allocate your time to do something for your mental health or attend events, it does not help how many great benefits your company offers you. Because in the end, your mental health and wellbeing will still be poor. This supports the before-mentioned statement from Interviewee 7 that YOU as an individual are responsible for your own wellbeing and you must strive for happiness and not the company can do that for you. The only thing the company can do is offer all sorts of support for employees, and try to encourage them to take it. But in the end, it is the employee himself who has to take advantage of it. In addition, companies should also consider paying more attention to the working time of employees, as some of them put themselves under great pressure to achieve the set goals and forget to take care of their wellbeing.

Moreover, another interesting finding was that only two out of ten interviewees indicated that their company is not offering any WLB benefits for their employees.

Manager

Support

According to interview data, one important factor which emerged is the support of the manager in terms of the wellbeing of employees.

Most of the interviewees stated that their manager supports them and looks after them if they need help in any way. Some examples of interviewees answers were:

[...]But for example, a small example right. I recently changed houses in Dublin. So, I told my manager that I am going to be quite busy that week because I was moving out, I was selling some items and I was moving into the new house and (eh) my manager was very understandable. He said finding a new house should be my main priority (eh) he understands that this causes stress and not to worry about the job and work (eh) make sure your move goes smooth and everything goes well and then it will be fine. That's just an example how they support us and how they support families if something comes up. (Interviewee 2)

[...] Our manager is a people's person in this kind of company compared to other companies I've seen. So, they are in charge of carrying about us and about our wellbeing. (Interviewee 9)

One manager said concerning to the support of the employees that they try to offer flexibility for certain cases:

[...] (Ehm) and I suppose from a management perspective there's flexibility in certain requests that you might get from teammates so, you know if they come in and say: Oh, I have to move house tomorrow I need some extra time that we can accommodate by approving (ehm) vacation days for them (ehm) you know we support with you know people need half day's time off. (Ehm) or if they have to go to a funeral (eh) things like that or if there's (ehm) somebody that might have a medical condition or a disability we'll support them whether that's with time off, flexible hours. Perhaps if they even need to go to part-time or somebody becomes long-term sick and they're not fit to work after 3 months period. We can pay them up to 75% of their salary (ehm) and the company's insurance as well. (Ehm) so, the flexibility is there so we do expect people just to be on time and complete their shifts and stick to their schedules when there in the office but for anything kind of outside of that. (Interviewee 8)

Another manager added that you have to lead by example to ensure that the team is taking holidays, for example:

[...] So, I take holidays and I take days off. And I tell my team I'm taking days off because I want you to take days off, you need to take them off.

Other interesting findings obtained from the interview data was that respondents mentioned that it is up to the manager and his or her management style whether they have a Work-Life Balance or not.

[...]So, I think for them it's really hard to achieve like Work-Life Balance. In terms of managing a team I would say it depends on the manager because some manager wants their teams to be relaxed and like with a good atmosphere to work but some managers they're really like stressful like they call you at night. Last time we went out for dinner with my colleagues from the other department and it was 10 or 11 in the evening and he got a phone call from his manager. (Interviewee 7)

[...]We are overconnected. So, the clear limit, there is no more line between private life and professional life. But I think this is my role as a manager to take care of my colleagues for them not to mix too many things. All depends of the managers. And the managers of the managers. Yeah, yeah that's the full management chain starting from the top management. If you don't have the top management let's say going into that direction that will never work for me. (Interviewee 4)

All these statements show how important the manager and his management style is. When employees have a good manager who supports them, they can work better, are more satisfied, less stressed and have a feeling of a better balance in their lives.

One respondent mentioned that the manager would support them, but in the end, it is more about achieving the goals. She also said that it is the personal pressure you put on yourself and the company that manipulates you, that work gets the most important thing in your life.

[...] It's basically all measured or it all depends on the target you know, if you don't reach your target it's harder for your manager to sign off a PTO or something because they know it's less realistic for me to reach my target and in the first place. They try to help you reaching your target and everything but in the end of the day it's what you do and how much you reach a day. You got lots of weekly one to ones with your manager where you can work on action plans. I'd say it's more the personal pressure you put on yourself to reach your target and not the manager. But I think that they are manipulating your thinking about that. Because work gets the most important. (Interviewee 1)

Another interviewee added to that statement:

[...]So, of course on the outside your manager would be like no take some time off you know but at the end of the day I noticed that it's sometimes a little bit fake as well. (Eh) sorry for the negative words. But that's definitely you know one of those things where they say our mental health and wellness and you know all of that is important but at the end of the day we're all in a business with capitalism so at the end of the day it's all about the results and the profit. (Interviewee 7)

Nevertheless, the statements of the respondents 1 and 7 show that there are managers who support you but only with the ulterior motive that the work is carried out satisfactorily and the employees achieve their targets. Ultimately, it is all about the business and the

success of the company, and the interest of the manager or the company in the mental health of its employees, is more of an illusion than a reality.

Some respondents pointed out that the relationship between employees and managers is important as well as trusting each other. This leads to a completely different feeling and attitude, how you approach the work and how much you ultimately feel comfortable working in the company.

[...]I feel like (ehm) between a manager and employee in general it's a lot about trust. And obviously like you might not having it from day one but (eh) at company XY people are really open-minded and when you've been hired there is like an entire process where you going to talk to different people and also because there is this (eh) feeling with people and (eh). So, yeah really, I always felt like I was trusted (eh) like all my co-worker not only my managers but even the manager of my manager even though some of the co-worker who I don't work with daily or we're not on the same market but (eh) I ask them questions all the time or they ask me questions all the time. Even during the onboarding process, it's part of it like we're never going to just be left behind on your own and trying to figure out what's going on and you could definitely just talk to anyone at any time. So, I would say like this part of trust is really important with the manager cause in like (eh) it's making a difference on how you feel you want to do your job. (Interviewee 5)

A manager added to this statement that a healthy balance is achieved by having confidence in employees and giving them freedom, but also by putting a little pressure on them to do their job:

[...]So, yes, I have a management style that is extremely open and collaborative (ehm) delegating a lot as well. So, that people are not stuck in a framework you know. When they have to go outside, people can explore. That's my job, just to take care of them not to go too far away from the strategy. And this is going well because people manage their own kind of way of delivering goals. So, that's a mix between giving freedom and my job is much more to ensure that the tasks are going into the right direction to deliver the goal that we have. And we are extremely open and like the flat hierarchy. I could be the director of what you want. They don't need to ask me if they know how to solve a problem without me. If they know some colleagues in Norway or somewhere else, just go directly solve your problem, do it yourself you know. I should not be a filter. Except if I can solve, help to solve some problem. Yeah, that's my job but, so this is why people find the right level of balance. Having the right level of pressure to deliver the task but also to create kind of openness environment where colleagues are just there to tell me: you know what, like that for now I may not be able to deliver on time that and that so I can help to prioritise and help to have the right balance. (Interviewee 4)

These statements were interesting for the researcher, since in previous literature managers were not a decisive factor for a good Work-Life Balance, but rather the company as a whole was always considered. Through the interview data it is now apparent how important managers and a good adapted management style is for people and how strongly it influences their mental health.

A further finding emerged out of the interview data was that not only the “normal employees” have stress in their work but also their managers are sometimes stressed and under pressure to meet the expectations from their employees. But managers stated that it is all about communication:

[...]There's always people they will never be happy. No matter what you do so, I mean sometimes you have employees that you know are taken the piss you know (eh) and they might be lazier than other people so they might always be trying to bend the rules for themselves for extra time off so it's about being able about to have difficult conversations with people. (Interviewee 8)

[...]There's definitely a lot of stress but if I need to push back I can push back. So, if I am finding it very difficult. (Interviewee 10)

Since it was only mentioned so far how employees are supported by their managers, the researcher also wanted to find out how and by whom managers are supported in return.

One manager explained that the managers support each other in every aspect:

[...] (Ehm) I'd suppose with the group of manager (ehm) within my department (ehm) we support each other. So, whether that's from a workload point of view. So, I mean when you work in a company like this, things can change within a day. I don't know so for example you could arrive at the office and none of the tills are working for anybody. So, we need to prioritise to work on that and resolve it straight away or we're quite supportive if anybody wants to you know take holidays. We will work around it as a group. We support each other to make sure that there's a sufficient amount of managers in the office at any time. (Interviewee 8)

Another manager indicates that she has to actively seek support and that the support for managers by companies could be much better. She has the feeling that managers get less support and have to deal with stress by themselves than employees who are below them.

[...] The people supporting me would be my colleagues, would be the people that I actually actively reach out to to have virtual coffees with, to have conversations with. (Ehm) the support structure for managers could be much much better in company XY as well as in other companies. I think there is more support for individual contributors like reps like sales reps then there's actually for managers. A lot of it is more kind of you're a manager, it's busy, suck it up as suppose then

actually being like a proper support function. That's something that I notice is quite missing in company XY from a manager perspective.
(Interviewee 10)

For the researcher, the statement was a very interesting insight because most of the time employees are only asked how their manager supports them but nobody necessarily thinks about the fact that managers are normal humans who also need support and are sometimes even under more stress and responsibility.

Technology

Digitalization

As some respondents have already stated, technology is the future in our business environment. For this reason, the researcher wanted to find out what participants' opinions are on new technologies such as digitalization.

The opinion of those interviewed is very conflictive as you can see from the diagram below. On the one hand, they see many advantages in digitalisation but on the other hand also a number of disadvantages.

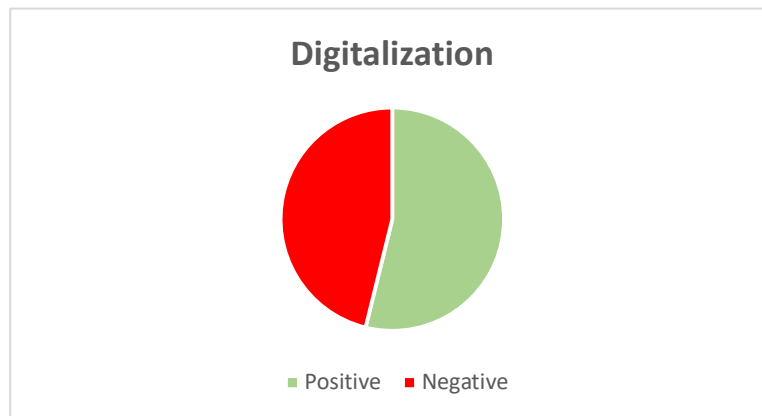


Figure 17: Digitalization (own illustration)

One respondent stated:

[...] (Ehm) digitalization as is good in is great of a benefit it is the biggest downside I would say that comes with it is constant noise and information and accessibility that comes with it.

Another interviewee added further:

[...] (Ehm) so, there's kind of like the digitalised impact of how it can affect you as a work expectation but also as an employee as well from a social point of view.
(Interviewee 8)

Seven out of 10 interviewees felt like they were 24/7 accessible as most of them have a work laptop or even a work phone. Only three people had the feeling that they are not 24/7 accessible. One respondent said:

[...]Personally, for me I haven't been impacted with that. So, I haven't been in an expectation of (ehm) have to use my own phone for work or have e-mail access or anything like that on mine. So, once I'm done and shut down at the end of the day I'm fine. I think for other people in the company for some managers that have to be contacted by phone you know obviously it's always ringing, the e-mails are always coming through even outside of work hours. (Interviewee 8)

Some interviewees mentioned that it is even harder now in the home office as all devices are at home and you are in a 24/7 "work environment" and this is mentally exhausting.

[...]When we were still in the office it was a little bit easier because I could just take I would leave my laptop in the office right. So, to me it was then the physical representation of I'm leaving it in the office which means I'm leaving work at work. Especially now being in home office and there's just this expectation to be constantly available for my teammates, for people for stakeholders I work with, for my customers. In home office my computer is constantly in the room with me and when I see it lying there you know you always feel bad you're not working because you're in charge of your targets right. So, there's always something you can do, there's always someone who can send me an e-mail to. So, yeah that can be really mentally exhausting and challenging. (Interviewee 7)

One interviewee adds an important statement because she says that each individual has it in his hands whether that person wants to be reached or not. You may feel that you are available 24/7 but if you do not want to be and need some time off you are responsible for turning off your devices.

[...]But I think it's very much on us as individuals. So, I think it's digitalization allows you to be as accessible as you want to be. And a lot of people and sometimes I complain that I'm too, that there's too many meetings we have too many but I could just like not go to them or I could say I need the space or I need some time to myself. So, it's up to individual really to do that. (Interviewee 10)

Nevertheless, the interview data confirm some of the theories that were mentioned in the literature. Because in this literature it was also stated that digitalization is good on the one hand because you can work from anywhere, tasks can be accomplished faster, better, and more flexibly. On the other hand, it mentioned that employees can feel overloaded by constantly checking and sending e-mails and unexpected phone calls outside working hours. Some people also have the feeling that they are reachable around the clock, 7 days a week (Wang *et al.*, 2016). All these new technologies can make it more difficult for people to achieve a real Work-Life Balance. As some respondents have already

mentioned, it is up to us as individuals to make sure that we do not let digitalization affect our lives too much and simply switch off our devices when we need a break.

Corona Pandemic

Change in Life

The main question the researcher asked the interviewees was: “what has changed in your daily life since the Corona Pandemic?”

Apparently, all respondents mentioned that they have to do home office since March, and some offices will not open until 2021.

Most of the interviewees have the option to work from everywhere they want to. One respondent said:

[...]I’m in Germany at the moment but we just got here. So, I stayed in Dublin for 4 months and I just went to Germany. A lot of people are working from everywhere. We have managers who are Irish who are working from France. (Eh) we have a lot of people who travelled to other countries (eh) because they prefer to stay there and work from there.

(Interviewee 2)

Respondents indicated that they now have many video calls and meetings, and some of them even feel that in the home office there is more than before in the office.

[...]Everything is via VC (Video Call). They offer all of the parties on VC. We stick to our daily meetings, we have our one to ones with the manager and the colleagues. (Interviewee 1)

[...]And having virtual meetings all the time. (Ehm) because we became way more meetings. So, it seemed as if they want to make sure if you’re ok so you have to be on a Zoom call and they were just way more meetings that we ever have and it was like back to back 30 minutes, 30 minutes, an hour, 30 minutes, an hour, an hour. (Interviewee 10)

Another point that respondents mentioned was that they feel less stress working in home office than when working in the office, as they work fewer hours and feel that their life is more balanced.

[...]The thing what changed is that I stopped work earlier because I noticed that everyone around me stopped work at 6,7 or 5. I work definitely less hours. It changed for me in terms of Work-Life Balance for me because there was a little like (ehm), I don’t feel that much connected anymore because I work for myself at my home and it’s not like everyone around me is hustling and doing. It feels like a little less stressful now. (Interviewee 10)

One Manager added:

[...]There can be a lot of drama and the atmosphere in the office can be negative, not always but sometimes. When you're there in person people are more likely to keep queuing at your desk and being more demanding of your time for certain things. Whereas I find now that we're working virtually that if instead of having a queue at my desk I can schedule additional meetings if I need to which is less stressful. (Interviewee 8)

In terms of work tasks, not much changed for most respondents, as they work in the technology sector and are already equipped with everything they need for their work.

[...]But apart from that they didn't really have any issues because as a technology company we were already equipped like (eh) it's not really a danger (eh) in terms of (eh) security for your (eh) work. We already had like as I said like I have my phone from my computer, so when I'm in the office I have a proper phone but when I'm out of the office I can still do my calls the same way from my (eh) computer. (Interviewee 5)

One respondent mentioned that she was already working virtually as she covers the German market:

[...]My work has not changed much because I've always covered the German speaking market from Dublin so I'm used to work virtually and working with phone or (ehm) the computer with virtual meetings anyways. So, not much has changed in my day-to-day.
(Interviewee 7)

These two statements confirm facts, which were also mentioned in the literature because it was found out that the tech industry is already prepared for home office compared to other industries and that some of them already had this possibility before COVID (Singh, 2020) .

Furthermore, one respondent stated that the company supports all its employees in working from home as much as possible.

[...]So, I know my company already provided what a lot of tech companies did like (eh) kind of give € 250 to (eh) provide you with what you need at home to be able to work comfortably.
And they really (eh) support the facts that if it could be like an issue in term of like (eh) mental health (eh) to stay inside all the time with the, that weather in Ireland and that I could (eh) need (eh) to go back to France at some point and then it's just like they're not sure like we're following the rules and that everything is going right but (eh) they really supported me on that site and it's not really an issue. (Interviewee 5)

One interesting finding through the interview data was that people actually like or even prefer to work from home as they do not have to commute every day and can organize their work better.

[...]Some of my colleagues they actually like, prefer to work from home. Because they don't want to show up in the office and maybe sometimes they live far so they feel it's good to work from home. (Interviewee 6)

Another respondent added to this statement that it allows even more flexibility in life:

[...]But I think this is giving a good flexibility to take care of the children for example and you know if you have any problem at home I don't know the plumber should come tomorrow morning that was just a nightmare sometimes to just to find a way and to manage that but I think this is just an easy way.

This statement again confirms the theory mentioned in the literature that home office has a good impact on working parents and offers more flexibility.

On the other hand, there are people who said that it is really hard for them to work from home because you are in the same environment around the clock and you cannot really "escape". They have the feeling that their work and their private life are no longer separate.

[...]And some are telling me you know what, when I'm at home I see my sofa, the TV and the fridge and it's hard for me to stay focused. (Interviewee 4)

[...]But if you are working from home, when you wake up, you turn on the, your laptop and doing work, work, work and sometimes it's I say even its dinner time someone will sent you a message and if it's urgent you still have to deal with that. So, you feel like work and life is not separated. (Interviewee 6)

Another statement that is consistent with the theory from the literature, as it has already been predicted there that it splits employees' views: Some will like the home office and for others, it will be really difficult to concentrate on their work (Singh, 2020).

Moreover, most of the respondents stated that they miss going to the office because of the interaction with co-workers. One good example of a respondent answer is:

[...]I miss office like crazy. Because the office is nice not the snack program because (eh) let's be honest it's Ireland (ehm) but what I miss is more like the entire interaction cause like (eh) as I said earlier we're a team of 45 but then in the team we're going to have like DACH from Germany and different countries. We have like a continental so more for Italy, France, Spain all of this and then we also have (eh) UK and Ireland and those people I, we don't really work on same markets. So, we may have some specific stuff where we going to be all together so for some trainings or some other area. But what I like is when I'm in the office I could just (eh) go to the site and like Hi, discuss a few stuff (eh) among the last years we've been mixed up at different (eh) occasion and we had like some people that just started and so I've been working even in my team with some people since (eh) 2 or 3 months now that I actually didn't met yet like. So, yeah, few areas are like I really miss the office and but it's more for the interaction with people.

Another interesting point mentioned by one manager is that it is very difficult for people to start a new job to be trained in a home office without ever having been in the office and getting support and seeing their colleagues in reality.

[...]The biggest challenge is the team I have at the moment, they joined the company during the lockdown. So, they never had the benefits that other people would have of hands-on support within the office. But we're trying to manage their knowledge and performance virtually. But overall it's been very achievable. (Interviewee 8)

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, relevant findings obtained from primary research data were presented and discussed. The findings were contextualized in relation to the research question posed in the earlier phases of the dissertation.

During the presentation of the findings of the interview data, a number of perspectives were emphasized and discussed on the basis of the literature. The importance of Work-Life Balance for employees in Tech Companies emerged through the presentation and discussion of the findings from the primary research. A similarity was found in the findings regarding the fact that stress due to long working hours and pressure to achieve targets, for example, can lead to mental health problems, such as burnout. In addition, it was also mentioned that technology is the future of companies and the business environment, as it is fast-moving, constantly changing and employees need to adapt to it and be flexible.

However, there were also some findings that had not previously been included in the reviewed theory. For example, in the literature, the term Work-Life Balance is always associated with a scale where on one side is work and on the other side is private life which is supposed to be in balance, which means that neither work nor private life should prevail. This statement is the most common understanding of what people think about Work-Life Balance, but it must be said that it is only a common theory. Work-Life-Balance can mean so much more because it is a personal perception as well as an attitude of people towards their life. There are people who work to live and others who live to work. For example, you cannot put these two people into the same "category" because they have completely different goals and needs in life. In addition, each person has a different understanding of the term Work-Life Balance and there are not always similarities as each person feels that there are different things in his life that are more important to him and that he needs to have fulfilled in order to have the feeling of a good Work-Life Balance. Furthermore, in the reviewed theory of literature, the term Work-Life Balance, as well as WLB benefits, are always considered a great concept but it is not necessarily great.

A good example is the flexible working hours, which are part of the WLB benefits and are seen as really great because people can manage their own lives and be more flexible. But it has never been mentioned that people feel more pressure to work overtime because they feel they have to finish their work or they feel they have not worked enough, which can lead to an imbalance in their lives instead of helping them find a balance.

Another finding from the interview data was that the literature actually always states that companies should have WLB benefits in order to have satisfied employees, but it was never considered that even if they did have them, this does not mean that employees use them or whether they really benefit from them. After all, as mentioned above, everyone is different and has different needs to feel a healthy balance in life. Furthermore, it is not enough for a company to offer all these benefits, it is also necessary to motivate employees to take advantage of them and to work on the benefits and improve them to meet the needs of their employees.

Finally, it has never been mentioned in the literature that managers and leadership styles can have a major impact on the wellbeing and mental health of employees, as the survey data now clearly reveals. The literature has only mentioned that companies should offer WLB policies/benefits and that this affects the wellbeing of employees, but it may be worth considering that training managers would also be important to have satisfied employees.

5. Concluding thoughts on the contribution of this Research, its Limitations, and Suggestions for further Research

5.1 Implications of Findings for the Research Questions

This chapter provides a summary of the study, including the implications of the study findings for the research question. Moreover, the contributions and limitations of the research will be shown. Hereinafter, practical recommendations are given as well as recommendations for future research. The final chapter will provide a conclusion of the findings and a reflection of the study.

First of all, through the analysis of the interview data, it became apparent that the term Work-Life Balance is familiar to everyone and seems important in most Tech Companies. Most of them even offer WLB policies/benefits for their employees. It has been determined that Work-Life Balance is in theory only associated with positive attributes in most literature, but if you analyse it more thoroughly there are some weaknesses. It was also interesting to discover that although the typical theory of Work-Life Balance was familiar to each individual, each person had a different perception and importance in the concept of achieving their own healthy balance. The best statement was: "Some people live to work and others work to live". These two people with different working attitudes, have completely different motivational factors and therefore have other views about what they consider necessary to achieve a balance in life. Moreover, it was found that people put themselves under more stress and pressure than the company or manager to achieve goals or tasks and voluntarily work overtime or on weekends.

Most employees feel that good managers and their support are essential for their wellbeing and job satisfaction. In addition, employees feel that the work culture in companies is very important and enjoy the many offered events and get together with colleagues and consider it more like "fun events with friends". This statement showed that work and private life can even merge together in a positive way not necessarily always in a bad way.

Additionally, most employees want flexibility, especially in terms of the workplace, as most of them are non-Irish citizens and would like to have the choice of working from their home country. In addition, people who work in a goal-oriented profession would want their company to adapt the targets to changing situations, e.g. COVID so that they have less stress and pressure as well as less overtime.

It was also interesting to note that although companies offer a lot of mental health and wellness events or meditation rooms, but not every employee requires or makes use of those for achieving good mental health. Some of the interviewees stated that they are able to organize and plan their own lives effectively and that sports, for example, help them to clear their heads and get a break from work. Others mentioned that they do not have time to use the opportunities.

Despite this, employees view it very positively when companies offer WLB policies/benefits. But in the end, the best final result from the interview data was that everyone is responsible for their own healthy balance between work and private life, and companies can offer so many WLB policies/benefits, but if the individual does not use them, they will not benefit from them in the end. “It's up to you as an individual to disconnect from work, because no company tells you to overwork yourself, you do it by choice. You decide whether you have a healthy balance in your life as you can strive to have one, with all the support companies are already giving you in terms of WLB policies/benefits.”

5.2 Contribution and Limitations of the Research

Contribution

The research contributed to understanding the Work-Life Balance experience of employees in Tech Companies within Dublin. In the vast majority of the literature published to date on Work-Life Balance, only strategies that demonstrate the positive effects of Work-Life Balance and the benefits of WLB policies/benefits for employees in companies are discussed. Furthermore, the negative effects that occur when the Work-Life Balance of employees is imbalanced are emphasized. However, it should be mentioned that the findings of the study made it clear that Work-Life Balance and WLB policies/benefits have never been researched deeply enough to analyse disadvantages or other people's perceptions and attitudes towards work and life as these can vary from individual to individual. Consequently, the findings made in the study of Work-Life Balance as well as WLB policies/benefits differed in part from the theory mentioned in the literature.

Limitations

The research has an explorative character and is therefore limited to a certain number of participants within the qualitative research strategy. Moreover, the lack of additional managers and more participants in the same profession is a limitation of this study, as it was more difficult to compare the responses with each other. Besides the researcher did not succeed in finding more interviewees with children therefore this results in a gap of this study, since most of the respondents did not know much about the offer for families in their company. A further limitation of the study results from the lack to generalize. Due to the choice of the research philosophy of interpretivism, the findings presented are very subjective by nature and cannot be transferred to the general public. Finally, the access and review of the theory, as well as literature of the research area Work-Life Balance and issues relevant to this topic, are limited, since not everything the researcher would have liked to include was found in the literature so far. In addition, the dissertation could have been much more extensive and detailed, but this was not possible due to the time frame of the dissertation.

5.3 Recommendations for Practice

The findings made within this study showed that most of the Tech Companies are already doing a lot for the Work-Life Balance for their employees, but still lack of some aspects why employees suffer still from stress or mental health problems. In the following are some recommendations that might help companies to improve their concept of WLB policies/benefits in order to enhance employee's wellbeing and increase corporate performance:

First of all, companies should strive for a Healthy Work-Life Balance for their employees, i.e. not only offer WLB policies/benefits but also insist on and encourage their employees to take advantage of them and give them the time to do so.

Secondly, Tech Companies have often mentioned in their corporate values that they are innovative: so, they should also use their "innovation" in WLB policies and pay more attention to what can really help the mental health of employees.

One consideration would be for the company to conduct regular surveys, as some of them are already doing, to actually find out what their specific employee needs are and what they expect from the company. This should be the basis for the company to analyse the feedback regularly and improve things in the best possible way for the satisfaction of their employees. As mentioned before, every employee has different needs and a different attitude towards the term WLB. This survey could help companies to find out what their employees really need and want in order to be satisfied, and adjust policies/benefits accordingly. In addition, as both the literature and respondents have said: if employees are motivated and satisfied in their work, they will automatically work harder, which in turn will have a positive effect on the company and its performance in order to strive for long-term success.

Another additional point is that companies should also keep an eye on their managers as the interview data shows that many employees have mental health problems due to their manager and his leadership style. Employees mentioned that much depends on the manager and his support whether they are satisfied with their work or not. One idea would be to provide regular anonymous feedback from employees about their managers so that companies either train their managers better or in the worst case dismiss the "bad" managers.

Finally, companies should keep a closer eye on the working hours of their employees. On the one hand, it is very good that companies allow their employees to work flexible hours so that they can better balance their personal and professional lives, but on the other hand, this leads many of them to feel that they have not worked enough or have to finish their tasks and are therefore constantly overworked and stressed out. This is something companies should try to control and prevent when they notice that an employee is working too much when they do not have to.

5.4 Recommendations for future Research

Due to the limitations of research, it is advisable to aim for generalizable results for the future. In further research, a more in-depth review and analysis of the Work-Life Balance in relation to employees with similar job roles in the tech industry is recommended to clarify the limitations of this study.

Another area for continued research was a gap in the literature on Work-Life Balance disadvantages arising from WLB policies/benefits. The researcher did not find useful literature on the different views on Work-Life Balance and WLB policies/benefits that would be relevant to achieve a better outcome of the study and to present a more meaningful view. Based on this fact this gap should be further researched in the future.

5.5 Final Conclusion and Reflections

The concluding chapter reveals the extent to which the findings of this dissertation correspond to the research objective and provide new insights in this area of study. Furthermore, recommendations for further practice in the field of Work-Life Balance were presented. The limitations and contributions of this research were highlighted to make recommendations regarding further research and to identify gaps in this study.

Considerations made in conducting this research include the topicality and importance of the Work-Life Balance issue, particularly concerning employees in the tech industry in Dublin as many multinational talents come here to work in well-known Tech Companies, whose mental health and wellbeing should be taken into account especially as they are away from their home country and family. This topic was of personal interest, as the researcher herself has friends in this particular industry who are struggling with mental health problems and unbalanced work-life. It was interesting to find out if all employees in this sector feel the same way or if there are other findings. Furthermore, a deeper understanding of people's perception and attitude towards Work-Life Balance has been achieved.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Informed Consent Form



Griffith College GBS Informed Consent Form

I. Research Study Title

The research work is dealing with the topic: "The role of Work-Life Balance in Tech Companies in Dublin and how to improve corporate performance as well as the wellbeing of employees". The research is conducted by Alisa Reich, an MSc. International Business Management student at the Graduate Business School of Griffith College Dublin.

II. Clarification of the purpose of the research

In recent years several factors such as globalization, changes in the working environment and more have influenced the Irish working environment. The business world is becoming unpredictable and fast-moving due to new technologies, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain a balance between work and leisure, as some employees are now available 24 hours a day. The concept of Work-Life Balance is a key factor that can influence important workplace issues. This research aims to provide insight into Tech Companies, the Work-Life Balance as well as the wellbeing of employees in this industry. There is already some research on Work-Life Balance in general, but there is no specific analysis for Tech companies in Dublin in particular. The study aims to gain new insights and possible solutions in this important area.

III. Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement

As previously stated in Plain Language Statement, the participants in this study are asked to take part in an interview by video, voice call or in person, which the researcher will request to record (audio and video only).

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

- Have you read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)?
Yes/No
- Do you understand the information provided?
Yes/No
- Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?
Yes/No
- Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?
Yes/No
- Are you aware that my interview will be audiotaped and do you agree to this?
Yes/No

IV. Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary

Participation in the research study is completely voluntary and you as the participant can withdraw from the research study at any time. There is no penalty for withdrawing before all phases of the research study have been completed.

V. Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations

Participants are asked to conduct the interviews in accordance with legal and ethical requirements. Furthermore, conscious efforts are made to respect the anonymity of the participants. Furthermore, the data collected will be analysed by the principal investigator alone. The names of the participants are also protected and the interview notes and transcripts are kept by the main researcher and stored in a safe place.

VII. Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project

Participants Signature: _____

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B – Plain Language Statement



GRIFFITH COLLEGE DUBLIN

Griffith College GBS Plain Language Statement

I. Introduction to the Research Study

The research work is dealing with the topic: "The role of Work-Life Balance in Tech Companies in Dublin and how to improve corporate performance as well as the wellbeing of employees". The research is conducted by Alisa Reich, an MSc. International Business Management student at the Graduate Business School of Griffith College Dublin. Alisa Reich can be contacted directly at alisa.reich@googlemail.com.

II. Details of what involvement in the Research Study will require

The participants have to be available for video calls, voice calls or if possible in person with the principal investigator. In some cases, the researcher may wish to have a follow-up meeting, therefore preliminary contact details are requested optionally. The duration of the interviews should not exceed one hour. In addition, the researcher will request that the interviews be recorded (audio and video only) to help with data collection and subsequent data analysis. Participants reserve the right to refuse the researcher's request to record an interview. The interviews will take place during the course of the Master thesis May to August 2020.

III. Potential risks to participants from involvement in the Research Study (if greater than that encountered in everyday life)

Possible risks of participation in this study should not arise for the participant.

IV. Benefits (direct or indirect) to participants from involvement in the Research Study

The results of this study are intended to inform the participants about the importance of Work-Life Balance in companies and possibly give them advice on how to optimize it. Through the study, it is desirable that participants recognize how important their wellbeing is in their daily work and that they may indirectly benefit in the future through their participation.

V. Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations

Participants are asked to conduct the interviews in accordance with legal and ethical requirements. Furthermore, conscious efforts are made to respect the anonymity of the participants. Furthermore, the data collected will be analysed by the principal investigator alone. The names of the participants are also protected and the interview notes and transcripts are kept by the main researcher and stored in a safe place.

VI. Advice as to whether or not data is to be destroyed after a minimum period

The intention is to destroy the collected data within one year after the researcher has presented the results of the research work in the Viva in September 2020.

VII. Statement that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary

Participation in the research study is completely voluntary and you as the participant can withdraw from the research study at any time. There is no penalty for withdrawing before all phases of the research study have been completed.

VIII. Any other relevant information

- It is planned that a total of about ten participants will be interviewed in the course of this study.
- All participants will be specifically selected based on their profession in one of the Tech Companies in Dublin.
- Furthermore, every effort will be made to respect the anonymity of the participants. Therefore, the collected data will be analysed by the main researcher alone.
- The research will be conducted in English, which is the second language for some of you. If you have any difficulties due to the language, please take your time to look up vocabulary or ask the researcher.

If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person.

Please contact:

Dr Garrett Ryan,
Griffith College Research Ethics Committee
South Circular Road, Dublin 8, Ireland

Mail: garrett.ryan@griffith.ie
Tel: +353 1 4163324

Appendix C – Transcript Interviewee (Example)

Transcript Interview 10

General information	
Age	34
Gender	Female
Marital Status	Single
Children	No but 2 dogs
Nationality	Irish/American
Type of employment	Fulltime
Place of work	LinkedIn, Dublin
Occupation/Job role	Manager for Sales Development Team in the CEE and Growth Regions in the Talent Solutions Team
Years of work in Tech Sector	over 5.5 years

Introductory Question

[I: Could you please tell me about your current job position and your task field?]

R: So, as I said I work as a manager of a sales development team. So, I manage a team of 8 people of sales developers. So, basically what they do is they are the top of the funnel when it comes to sales. So, if you think about it if I can give you an analogy about fishing (ehm) the sales development team are the ones who go out into the water. They get there fishing rod. They find a fish. They reel it in and then they'll bring it back home and they give it to an Account Executive to see whether it's good or not. And whether it will be cooked. That's basically the team that I would manage. So, there are all very early in their sales career. (Ehm) the people that I manage are from completely different demographics. So, I have a girl who's French/Israeli. I have who's Ukrainian, a girl who's Polish, a guy who's Nigerian, a guy who's Turkish. So, there all from completely different nationalities. (Ehm) and my main priority is with the team are coaching them to be as efficient leaders as possible (eh) hiring a more diverse people within our team. (Eh) and also when it comes to them (ehm) partnership management. So, I work with a lot of different partners within LinkedIn such as Sales Managers, people in sales operations, marketing etc. So, I need to build very strong relationships with them. So, that will have a knock-on positive fact with my own team. (Ehm) I manage two separate types of Sales Representative. I manage outbound and inbound. So, the difference between them is inbound work with marketing campaigns. So, marketing campaigns go out and any people who click on like an e-book or they want to receive a demonstration of our tools. All of those leads go to the inbound representative and they go through and try to source which are good and which are not good. And then the outbound representative they actively go out into the market looking for people that could potentially our customers. So, they work very closely with Account Executives (ehm) and they look at you know which industries would be the best to find people, which regions will be the best, what type of people, what titles they have. So, I would coach them through like different (ehm) say e-mails they could sent, communications they can have. I would do roleplays with them in regards to the best types of calls they would have (ehm) and also within LinkedIn each one of the Sales Representatives they also have a sales academy. That is like a

university specifically for junior sales representatives, helping them to get through and understand what it's like to be a very successful sales representative and I also coach them through that as well.

[I: That sounds interesting. How would your typical workday would look like before Covid?]

R: So, it would be very, very it would really depend. And that's why I love my job because everything is, every day is different so it's not. Even though it is a 9 to half 5 job it isn't really. So, normally I would, I live in Deansgrange which is in the South of Dublin. So, normally I would've gotten a bus to work or I actually bought an (ehm) e-scooter like a scooter that I could actually get into work. So, it could take depending on traffic 30 minutes to maybe 50 minutes depending on traffic. So, I could get the bus at 6.30 if I want to go to the gym in the morning. Otherwise I would tend to maybe get the bus at around 7 or quarter past 7. (Ehm) then I would start my day maybe at 8.30 or maybe 8 o'clock depending on what calls I need and then throughout the day it really depends. I would have you know 30 minutes of one-to-one catch ups with my team every week. Then I would have one hour of coaching with them every two weeks. We would have our team meeting. Then in my own work as (ehm) Sales Development Manager I have my own team as well as of other SD Managers and we would have our own team meeting and we would have every two weeks for 30 minutes I would meet all my (ehm) stakeholders as well like my partners, sales managers etc. So, it really depends so I try to be very strict and finish at like 5.30 but sometimes it could be 6.30 or 7.

[I: Does it often happen that you stay longer or do you maybe also work at the weekend sometime?]

I: So, say for instance what I try to do is I'm much happier bringing my laptop home. So, I would try to get out of the office at 5 or 5.30 pm and then I would be on my phone on the bus if I needed to be or I would do some work in the evening times but again I try to be very strict with that but I'm not consistently overextending myself. The weekends not necessarily unless like say for instance once every quarter, so once every three months. We would have to do big presentations with our stakeholders, IE or Sales Teams that we work with. (Ehm) and they would need a bit of preparations. Sometimes I could do it (ehm) but I'm also doing a Masters in college. So, I spent most of my weekends just studying for my Masters more so than working.

[I: That's impressive that you're doing your Masters while working. So, as you have a pretty busy schedule are you still able to pursue your interest or meet friends and family?]

R: So, the good thing about, well the only thing aligning with corona virus was that I didn't have to see anybody so, I actually got to work a lot more and study a lot more. (Ehm) so, like I'm quite good with my schedule and I do try to meet with people as much as possible. So, even say for instance this week I took Monday as a study day and then I got my assignment for college in the morning. So, I drove into the city and met with one of my friends. You know and then I'm going to go into town this evening and I'm going to meet another of my friends for dinner. So, it wouldn't necessarily be that I would be exhausted all the time none the less I did do an energy management audit on myself and I it's like it's out of 20 where is 20 is really, really bad. So, I'm between, I was originally

like a 12 were I was close to burning out but I was somewhat energized and then I moved to a 10. So, imagine I'm a 10 now and I can share that energy with you after our call if you like to see it.

[I: That's really good. So, would you say you have a good balance right now and you are less stressed?]

R: It does depend. So, I went down to Cork for a holiday last week, the week before last. So, then I was quite energized afterwards but before that I was quite stressed. So, I am quite good at seeing when I'm starting to get very stressed and then I take some time off. Because I'm no good to myself and I'm no good to my team if I'm super stressed out all the time.

[I: Yes, I see your point. Why did you actually decide to work in the tech industry?]

R: So, I originally worked as a recruitment consultant. So, I have been recruiting for IT people and that was the first time that I actually fell in love tech. Now I'm not good at tech. So, being an actual technology professional is never going to work for me. But I realized when I was in recruitment (ehm) I became very passionate with digital online. (Ehm) like digital marketing anything to do with online and I did a diploma in (eh) digital marketing from the Dublin Business School and then I realized I actually would prefer to sell digital then actually be working in digital. So, because I was a recruitment consultant I was using LinkedIn all the time. So, that was kind of I was very much aligned to: "Ok I want to sell digital" and then LinkedIn was the place that I really wanted to go. Because I really believed in their vision and I believed that technology for me it's so ever changing, it's so innovative. You know, there are so many people in tech that just want to change the world in a very good way and I wanted to be part of that journey in whatever capacity I could within tech.

[I: That's interesting. How would you describe the work culture in LinkedIn?]

R: Well, after the news not so great. But no, I mean the beautiful thing with LinkedIn it's interesting, you know it very much is like a work hard, play hard type of (eh) place. You know, we work very, very hard but the business does give us a lot. So, say for instance: one day every single month, we get a day like a specific like a culture day whereby the business actually gives something back to us. So, maybe one day could be about the environment or could be about mental health or could be about (ehm) you know (eh) your body you know or giving back to the community. So, literally they tell you go away, leave your desk, be involved and they have all these different like sessions and symposiums and webinars and different things you can get involved in. So, it's really nice from a culture perspective because again you know the main cultural tenance of LinkedIn are you know humour and integrity and collaboration and things like that. All of those things mean a lot to them you know. So, our own mental health. Talking about mental health is not tabu in LinkedIn where is in other companies it is. You know, people say it's not tabu but if you tell people: I have anxiety or I'm feeling depressed or you know I have a lot going on. Sometimes they would look at you more negatively. They won't mean to but sometimes it can be more biased towards you. Whereas in LinkedIn people are a lot more open about talking about what they're going through which is quite nice and refreshing.

[I: Yes, that's right. Probably you know the term Work-Life Balance, what do you understand by it?]

R: So, I guess Work-Life Balance means you can actually have a life and you can also work at the same time. So, a lot of people you know they, you have people who live to work and you have people to work to live you know. So, it's having the balance between that. I don't necessarily work isn't my entire life so, I want to have a life outside of that. But there need to be a balance. So, you know personally for me like as I said to you earlier I'm Irish/American. So, I have an Irish passport and I have an American passport and one of the big reasons that I'm not working in America is because they don't really have a Work-Life Balance there. They don't really (ehm) it's not something that is (eh) positive. You know (ehm) it's frowned upon if you take a lot of annual leave, they work extremely hard within the business and that's ok for some people but I think the European way of working is much more aligned towards what I would like in my life i.e. an actual Work-Life Balance.

[I: Yes, I understand. Because you just mentioned that it's stressful to work in America but LinkedIn is an American company. So, would you say they have different policies in Europa than in America?]

R: Well, say for instance if I give you one example. So, annual leave, so annual leave in the Dublin office for instance and across Europe is 25 days. In America it is (ehm) unlimited. They changed it in America to only unlimited. Now this is only my educated guess. They wouldn't give us unlimited because in Europe we would take it whereas in America. What happens in Ireland say for instance my team if they're not taking their annual leave at the end of the year I say to them you have 5 extra days you need to take them with unlimited leave you don't need to do that. So, Americans maybe will take 6 days or 10 days they don't have an allocated amount of time and then it's potentially frowned upon if they take too many days. Whereas in the Dublin office for instance. We are actively telling our team, I actively had to force my team during corona virus to take annual leave cause I said I know you have nowhere to go but you're gonna burn out, you're gonna be no use to yourself or me if you don't take this time off. So, please take this time off. You know wherease in America they wouldn't necessarily do that.

[I: Ok, I see that point. What are you actually doing as a Manager for your team in terms of Work-Life Balance?]

R: So, say for instance. Well, again it's all about leading by example as well. So, I take holidays and I take days off. And I tell them I'm taking days off because I want you to take days off, you need to take them off. So, I think leading by example is one of the big things you can do. (Ehm) and then say for instance on Friday I'm going to one of the girls on my team. She's not, you know she's not in a very positive frame of mind right now. So, I'm gonna drive into town and I'm gonna meet her for lunch. And I told the rest of my team: "Hey let's meet up in the Phoenix Park or Stephen's Green. Let's go for an ice cream, let's go for a hot chocolate." (Ehm) one of the other days I made up little goodie bags for all members of my team and I drove to each one of their houses and dropped off a little goodie bag for them at the end. Because our fiscal year finishes in June. So, just before the end of the fiscal year I want them to feel safe, I want them to feel supported and loved. So, I did that. Even though it isn't necessarily a balance like we're still in work you know. My main, I have two priorities towards them. My first priority is there mental

health and their wellbeing and my second priority is there activities. Because if they feel supported, if they feel that I see them as human beings and that I'm there for them wholeheartedly their activity will consistently follow. And it does because my team is consistently high achievers and I don't push them massively in that regard like we do have our key performance indicators we do have metrics etc. but they know how focused I am on their mental health and wellbeing.

[I: That's really nice of you. But do you sometimes feel stressed to meet every one's expectations, problems etc.?)

R: I would say yes. There's definitely a lot of stress but if I need to push back I can push back. So, if I am finding it very difficult. If I say to one of my team: "Look can we move your one to one to tomorrow." They're all very, very completely ok with that. You know, but I know the sense of them that if people are struggling if they're having a tough time. I will just kind of push through in any stress that I have and give them support. You know because at the end of the day you know it happens for me that I end up being momma bear like one of my teams said: "Do you have any childrens?" And I said no and she said you have 8 now. And I was like ok (hahaha).

[I: That's good. What does LinkedIn offer in terms of Work-Life Balance benefits?]

R: Let's say, you will have your 25 days (ehm) and then you'll also have that's not including bank holidays. So we would have bank holiday on Monday it's not included but look we get to take it off like it's part of our days off. (Ehm) they give us (eh) educational reimbursement. So, we get 4 and a half grant per year (eh) to go and to education. (Ehm) they allow us to take study days as well. So, it's not official but between you and your manager I don't have to take annual leave days if I have college all day or if I need to study. (Ehm) Work-Life Balance, yeah, so we have we used to have access to headspace I still think we still have access to that as well. And we have access to an e-learning platform called LinkedIn learning which is part of our own company and it has lots of stuff to do with meditation, mindfulness, things like that. (Ehm) we have access to this (ehm) benefit called perk up which is about twelve hundred a year and we get to use that towards getting massages, going to the gym, childcare, I think to do with pets as well, pet walking things like that. (Ehm) what else, (ehm) we also had like when we were in the office we had an onside gym. So, there's like pilates, yoga. So, I think healthy body and healthy mind is also a big value of LinkedIn as well and that was something that they were very keen for us to continue. So, even as we work remotely we also have access to life virtual (eh)workouts. So, like all throughout the week there's strengths and fitness and there's pilates, there's yoga, there's lots of different things. (Ehm) because they believe that we need to also taking care of our bodies as well.

[I: That's great, they offer quite a lot.

What do you actually think about the statement that digitalization leads to 24/7 accessibility?]

R: So, it is true. But I think it's very much on us as individuals. So, I'm much more accessible at home then I was in the office cause I could leave my laptop in the office. But I'm also connected on my phone you know. (Ehm) but it's up to me to instil this in my team that I'm not contactable at the weekends and when I went on annual leave I deleted all my apps and got somebody to support my team. (Ehm) so, specifically so that

they had support there but they knew that I was not contactable. So, I think it's digitalization allows you to be as accessible as you want to be. And a lot of people and sometimes I complain that I'm too, that there's too many meetings we have too many but I could just like not go to them or I could say I need the space or I need some time to myself. So, it's up to individual really to do that.

[I: That's a good point. What would you say, how do you cope with stressful times or pressure at work?]

R: I do a lot of yoga. So, I'm doing a lot of it, I'm not saying I'm good at it non or less I do it. (Ehm), I think as well it's really important, so say for instance when you move into management kind of your job is very much to support (ehm) and it takes a lot of energy to support a team. So, what I learned when I got into management was like that I needed my own kind of tribe to support me as well and to give me energy. Because I was giving so much energy to my team that I wasn't getting any energy back and I was becoming very, very drained. So, what I actively had to do was find like my tribe of women and men they were able to give me energy. So, whether it was my partner, whether it was some of my friends. You know, say for instance other SD Managers we would have like every two weeks we would have like a ladies kind of wine night and then every Friday morning we have like a SD Managers breakfast for everybody. You know just so we can kind of get together and we can vent or we can talk or we can explain or we can kind of support each other in that way. So, I think that's really important but again you have to actively look for it.

[I: Ok, I understand. As you are the manager and you are kind of like a supporting person. Who will support you?]

R: So, I would say that, so I would have a manager. My manager will be there to support as well but then she has another team as well so it's not just me. So, again the people supporting me would be my colleagues, would be the people that I actually actively reach out to to have virtual coffees with, to have conversations with. (Ehm) the support structure for managers could be much much better in LinkedIn as well as other companies as well. I think there is more support for individual contributors like reps like sales reps then there's actually for managers. A lot of it is more kind of you're a manager, it's busy, suck it up as suppose then actually being like a proper support function. That's something that I notice is quite missing in LinkedIn from a manager perspective.

[I: Ok. What would you say, what changed for you in terms of work and your mental health since the corona pandemic?]

R: I guess it was consistently sitting down at your laptop all the time. And having virtual meetings all the time. (Ehm) so again you know, what I did to calm back that because I have a Fitbit and I wasn't wrecking up any steps. So, I was like this is horrendous so you could like one of the big things that happens is Zoomfatic. So, in the first like 2 or 3 weeks of working from home during corona virus I got really bad Zoomfatic. So, what I started doing was I started telling my team right for our 30 minute one to ones I'm gonna call your mobile and you go for a walk where you are and I'm going for a walk where I am. And so, I tried to do it every single day I will be walking for at least an hour. (Ehm) because otherwise it was just, it was a lot and then trying to fit in (ehm) exercise in the middle, like around that as well. (Ehm) because we became way more meetings. So, it

seemed as if they want to make sure if you're ok so you have to be on a Zoom call and they were just way more meetings that we ever have and it was like back to back 30 minutes, 30 minutes, an hour, 30 minutes, an hour, an hour. So, I started being very, very strategic with my calendar and making sure that I had space put in there. So, that I actually could breathe during the day.

[I: Yes, I see your point. Are you satisfied with your current Work-Life Balance situation or would you have any wishes or recommendations towards your company what they could do better?]

R: I mean, personally I would love to have a 4-day working week. I feel like I could definitely get as much as I need to get into my job in 4 days rather than 5. (Ehm) the 4 days would be packed but it would definitely I mean I feel like especially working from home, being on Zoom all the time, 5 days is a lot. But I don't think it's anything that our companies necessarily gonna do anything about.

[I: Ok. What would you say is the most important thing in the field of Work-Life Balance regarding the future?]

R: I think, I mean they could potentially consider increasing annual leave. So, you actually properly get more time off. (Ehm) shortening the working day or shortening the working week (ehm) definitely having more external meetings. So, like meeting your teams more in the park and you know once a week or every two weeks that we actually meet together because I do find it's very, it is a different way of managing when you are virtual I suppose as when you are face to face. But I guess what gonna happen is that a lot of people have moved to Ireland because of work and because of LinkedIn. (Ehm) and this isn't something that they necessarily wanting to do if they're working from home. They're not going to want to leave their home countries, they going to want to stay in their home countries. So, I think tech companies really need to look at (ehm) they really need to look at hiring more remote workers. And people who are (eh) in different countries because there is a wealth of talent across Europe And (ehm) people maybe don't want to move to Ireland because it rains and it's windy and it's really expensive you know. So, I think that's definitely something we could tap into. But I do understand that the companies would have to pay tax to that country if they did hire those people and I don't think a lot of companies necessarily want to do that but I think they're going to have to look at it because when corona virus hit a lot of foreign nationals within our company, didn't want to work in Dublin anymore, didn't want to work in their small little flat, they wanted to go home to their families. And I think we should allow them to do that.

[I: Yeah, that's a good point. Finally, would you like to raise a topic concerning Work-Life Balance I didn't ask you about?]

R: (Ehm), I guess it's just like companies having more like really being more invested in the balance especially from working from home. So, I think this is taken, corona virus took everyone by surprise. So, I don't think, companies are scrambling a lot to try to figure it out and thankfully so many of us are online especially within the tech industry. I'm very grateful to be in that industry because everything is online but I think we do need to work a lot more as a unit. So, as I mentioned earlier throughout our conversation it's me having to actively look for my tribe, having actively go for a walk, having to actively so, there isn't really like a mandate within LinkedIn saying right: "Everybody,

we going to have a no meeting Wednesday.” You know, where nobody is going to have meetings if they don’t want to have that everybody is just going to be do their own work, their admin, their calls whatever. You know (ehm) or this time every day or half day. But I think it need to come more from companies, they need to mandate this more because I may have the mindset to actually do these things myself. But a lot of people don’t and there is going to be a quite a large number of people who are getting burned out very, very quickly within this instance. There are not taking care of their mental health and maybe they don’t know how to do it. So, I think companies have to actually mandate these things and that’s what I think we need to do.

Appendix D – Interview Sheets (Example)

Number	Main questions (open-end)	Subject Areas	Directing questions
1.	Introductory Question	Current situation	
	Could you please tell me something about your current job position, the task field? and how would your typical work day look like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Role • Task Field • Typical Day • Working Hours • Leisure Time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What time do you start working and approx. finish work? • How long do you commute? • Are you still able to pursue your interests e.g. sport, family/friends time etc.?
2.	Why did you decide to work in this sector?		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tech Industry • Employee Motivation • Company Benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you become interested in this sector? • Are the career and promotion opportunities good in this industry? • Does your company offer any benefits (e.g. free food/drinks, gym etc.)?
3.	How is the work culture like in your company?		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work culture • Work activities/benefits • Relationships between colleagues, manager 	
4.	Did you hear about the term Work-Life Balance before and what do you understand by it?		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge about WLB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think it is possible to achieve a balanced life between work and life? • Do you have the feeling that your life is balanced?
5.	What are the main challenges in your job?		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress/Pressure • Mental Health • Working Hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have monthly goals which you have to meet to be successful? • Do you feel pressured to meet them and do you feel that you are taking the work home with you?

6.	Do you work overtime sometimes or at the weekend? And how do you manage your private life?		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Hours • WLB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many hours would you approx. work more per day? • Does it often happen that you work at the weekends? • Do you still have time to enjoy your private life or do you feel stressed?
7.	What do you think about the statement that digitalisation such as social media lead to 24/7 accessibility?		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, do you have to be reachable during your work-free time? • Do you have a work phone, an app on your private mobile phone where you can receive work e-mails or be contacted from work? • Does it often happen to you, that you will get disturbed from work messages during your free time? • How do you cope with that?
8.	How do you cope with stressful times and pressure at work?		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WLB • Stress/Pressure • Mental Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you often feel stressed and under pressure at work? • What are your strategies to try to balance work and private life?

9.	Does your workplace offer work-life policies, programs or other benefits?		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WLB benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If yes, what do they offer (e.g. flexitime, half days, compressed work week e.g. approx. 40 hours in fewer than 5 days, telecommuting (Home office), on-site family friendly environment (bring your child to work), child-care centre, paid maternity leave, elder care, wellness/mental health days, provide educational support (ongoing learning), team events). Can you easily access it and have you used these resources?
10.	Do you feel supported by your employer/manager in terms of work-life balance (such as flexible working hours etc.) deadlines, or in unforeseeable events during your regular working hours?		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support from company Manager WLB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does he support you? How does the company support you? Do you think the manager plays an important role if you have a good work/life balance or not?
11.	Has the Corona Pandemic changed something in your daily work routine and your mental health?		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corona Pandemic Mental Health WLB Work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does your day now look like? Do you still work overtime? Do you feel that your Work-Life Balance is now better or even worse? Do you miss working at your workplace or do you prefer Home office?

12.	Are you satisfied with your current Work-Life situation or what would your expectations/recommendations be at your company to gain a better balance between work and private life and be more motivated?		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee satisfaction • Motivation • WLB • Recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what respect would you like your company to support you more? • What could your manager do? • Do you think that would change your daily life? • Would you address any issue or make recommendations to your company in order to get a change/improve the Work-Life Balance? •
13.	Finally, what do you think is most important in the field of Work-Life Balance for the future?		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations • Decisive factors • Future 	
14.	Would you like to raise a topic concerning Work-Life Balance what I didn't ask you about?		

Appendix E – Codebook (Example: Interviewee 1 and 2)

Theme	Category	Code (Key Words)	Frequency	Prime Example	Allocation Interview 1	Allocation Interview 2
1) Work	a) Job Roles	Sales Roles	5		(Ehm) basically I'm (ehm) responsible for outbound marketing and sales in LinkedIn. This means I have to (ehm) generate leads in order to sales our business solutions it's called LinkedIn Learning, which is a E-Learning platform. (Ehm) if I had to describe my job it's basically I'm reaching out to customers via E-Mail, Phone or In-Mails, which is a channel from LinkedIn and (ehm) I create campaigns for that in order to reach my customers best.	
		Manager	3			
		Other Roles	4			So, (eh) I am a customer success manager. I have a portfolio of customers and (eh) I am responsible for their customer success (eh) I am responsible that they use salesforce well (eh) and that they renew their contract in the end with us (eh) I am not responsible for sales but I am responsible for everything related to customer success. (Eh) I have aligned to a portfolio spread out in the emerging market, so that means Eastern Europe, Southern Europe, Middle East and Africa.
	b) Day to Day	Fixed Working Hours	3			
					We have flexbile working hours but usually I start working at 8 (eh) I am in the office at 8 am. I leave around (eh), I work a bit and I have breakfast and I work a bit for a few more hours and I have lunch and I work a bit more and I leave the office around a quarter to 5 pm and (eh) yeah it is hard to say a typical day like really every day is different.	
		Flexible Working Hours	7	We have flexbile working hours but I would start around 7.30/8 am in the morning and (ehm) my day would end around 8pm sometimes 7, sometimes 9 but I'd say in average 8 pm.		
		Travel (abroad)	1			
		Travel (commute)	8	And my commute It's like 2 minutes, it's the building next to LinkedIn.	I commute normally (eh) 25 minutes I would say. I take the Luas, I walk 5 minutes, take the Luas and then I walk again 5 minutes.	
		Targets/Missions	2			
		Meetings	4	(Ehm) a typical day would also include meetings.	sometimes I have internal meetings and so every day is different.	

c) Working Hours	Positive	7		
	Negative	8		
	Overtime -> yes	3	For me, I do have a long working day. It took me more than the usual 8 hours a day.	
	Overtime -> sometimes	5		Sometimes, not too often. It is just sometimes you work overtime if there is a project due or there's an event or something
	Overtime -> never	2		
	Targets	3	Because my job is (ehm) connected with a target.	
	Flexible System	5	We do not have structured working hours it's more like (eh) flexible system, so I could start whenever and I could leave	At salesforce there are super flexible.
	Work at weekends -> yes	1		
	Work at weekends -> sometimes	4	And even though we have off on the weekends I used to work a few days on the weekends.	
	Work at weekends -> seldom	3		Sometimes I work weekends but not too often.
	Work at weekends -> never	0		
	No payment for overtime	3		We don't get paid for overtime.
	Other days work less	2		(eh) but sometimes you work less. (Eh) because yes, sometimes it happens that you have to work a bit longer a day but then you can also leave again another day. Sometimes on Friday afternoon when I don't have much work left I just leave the office earlier for example.
	Work on bank holidays	1		
	Mental Health	2	"I read that there's kind of a ratio in mind that if you start to work significant overtime including the weekend for more than 3-4 weeks, then this is just mentally dangerous. Mentally in term of just to prevent you know burnout." (Interviewee 4)	
	Take care of Working Hours	2		

			"(Eh) but in the end of the day like nobody is going to tell you to work later or to do more stuff or anything it's really like you do handle your stuff and I know on my side there's some days where I really want to end up something today and I can end up staying 2 hours more but (eh) which is funny maybe after an hour if someone is leaving and is already leaving late they probably gonna show up at your desk like: "what are you doing here? Why are you still here like?" (Interviewee 5)	
	Not forced to work more	3		
	Not easy to work from home	1		
	Agency workers	1		
	Holidays not always Holidays	1		I think that (ehm) in Work-Life Balance I did mentioned the vacation or the holidays are not always holidays.
	Rotor for the year	1		

d) Main Challenge	Positive	3			
	Negative	8			
			<p>"I'd say it's the target. How can I reach them, what can I do better, what can I do next to reach my target, so it was not easy for me to switch off from work and (ehm) yeah the target is something which put pressure on you definitely." (Interviewee 1).</p> <p>"Now I put so much effort and so much work but if the customer, the element isn't you know the next step isn't happening which isn't in my control then it doesn't matter how much I work it effects my performance. Because I'm measured on targets."</p>	<p>I'd say it's the target. How can I reach them, what can I do better, what can I do next to reach my target, so it was not easy for me to switch off from work and (ehm) yeah the target is something which put pressure on you definitely.</p>	<p>It's more we are measured on a trition, that means a number of companies that leave us they decide not to renew their contract and (eh) this is a team target and this is measured annually, so not on a monthly basis. Then we also have some other KPI's as we call it key performance indicators and there are on an individual level (eh) for example number of opportunities you have created and (eh) that's a really important thing as well. So, there are some individual targets but it's mainly team targets.</p>
	Targets	5 (Interviewee 7)			
	Market	2		<p>I'd say it's the target but in connection with the market.(Ehm) as I mentioned before I'm responsible for E-Learning in the DACH region and this is a great product and it's working perfectly fine in the US and the UK but see in the German market we're just not that digitalised. It's just not that it's that modern (ehm) so that we, our market is pretty small so far and lots of customers say, that they're not prepared, they do not have access to PC's and the industry is especially automotive industry and it's not really ready for E-Learning and it's a great part of the German industry.</p>	

				"I mean I can just talk about myself but I have work constantly on my mind because you can never really disconnect because it's like you think about ok it's half of the month gone and I haven't reach half of my targets."(Interviewee 1)	I mean I can just talk about myself but I have work constantly on my mind because you can never really disconnect because it's like you think about ok it's half of the month gone and I haven't reach half of my targets.	
		Never Disconnecting	2			
		Being flexible	2			(Eh) at salesforce you have to be quite flexible. We are really flexible. (Eh) strategies can change, (eh) any year, teams can change. For example, when I started at salesforce 3 years ago. The job I applied for at salesforce, the job I ended in, it did not exist 5 years ago. So, this shows how quickly companies can change, and jobs become available, but they can also disappear or they change your jobs slightly (ehm) yeah you have to be flexible. So, I would say that's the main challenge.
		Tech Industry = fast changing	1			(Eh) I think in the tech industry because it's such a fast-paced environment and they always say it's everywhere but which I'd say is a great benefit but also has some disadvantages.
		Pressure: yes	1			
		Pressure: not really	1			(Ehm) it's ok. (Eh) so the pressure is ok it's not too bad and it's not too less.
		Healthy Balance	1			It's a healthy balance so I'm not directly in sales.
		Sales	2			In sales the pressure is higher but the rewards are also higher.
		Be up to date	1			
		Bad Support	1			
		Stuck between global strategy & local needs	1			
		Part of the job	2			
		Team Comparison	1			
		Frustrating	1			
		Challenging	2			Sales can be exiting but it can also be more challenging.
		Positive Stress	1			
		Changing tasks	1			
		People's Behaviour	1			
		Prioritization	1			
		No Idea	1			

2) Work-Life Balance	a) Understanding of the term	Positive	9			
		Negative	5			
		Know WLB	10		Yes	(Eh) yes, I have heard about it.
		Don't know WLB	0			
		Normal Working Hours (8)	1		(Ehm), well the German Work-Life Balance for example, if I talk to my friends about my working conditions they are like a little bit of not concerned but they are like ok cool because usually most of my friends work 8 hours a day.	
		Payment for Overhours	1		Usually they get paid for their over hours	
		Free Days for Overhours	1		...or their overtime if not they get personal time off or holidays from the hours the worked more.	

		Sales=24/7	1		This is not the case for me, because if you work in sales you will never have a day off, because if a customer wants to reach you you have to be available. This means whenever I have a day off and the customer calls I will pick up the phone because it could be a opportunity for sales.	
		Important Topic	2			I think it's really important to meet as well.
		Healthy Balance	6	"So, I guess Work-Life Balance means you can actually have a life and you can also work at the same time. So, a lot of people you know: you have people who live to work and you have people who work to live you know. So, it's having the balance between that."		(Eh) it's just that everything is in balance right, the amount of work you do (eh) versus the pleasure you get out of life (eh) so you don't work too much. so far at salesforce I always managed to have a healthy one. (Eh) of course some weeks you are more busy then others but overall I would say it's good, it's successful.

				<p>"But I think this is my role as a manager to take care of my colleagues for them not to mix too many things. Yeah, that's my job but, so this is why people find the right level of balance. Having the right level of pressure to deliver the task but also to create kind of openness environment where colleagues are just there to tell me: you know what, like that for now I may not be able to deliver on time that and that so I can help to prioritise and help to have the right balance. I would say all depends of the managers. And the managers of the managers. Yeah, yeah that's the full management chain starting from the top management. If you don't have the top management let's say going into that direction that will never work for me."</p>	
		Manager Job	4	(Interviewee 4)	
		Sharing Work	1		
		Helping each other	2		
		Off means Off	1		
		Management Style	2		
		No pressure to meet expectations	1		
		Evaluation at Work	1		
		Flexibility	2	<p>"(Ehm) and I suppose from a management perspective there's flexibility in certain requests that you might get from teammates so, you know if they come in and say: Oh, I have to move house tomorrow I need some extra time that we can accommodate by approving (ehm) vacation days for them (ehm) you know we support with you know people need half day's time off. (Ehm) of if they have to go to a funeral (eh) things like that or if there's (ehm) somebody that might have a medical condition or a disability we'll support them whether that's with time off flexible hours. Perhaps if they even need to go to part-time or somebody becomes long-term sick and they're not fit to work after 3 months period. We can pay them up to 75% of their salary (ehm) and the company's insurance as well. (Ehm) so, the flexibility is there so we do expect people just to be on time and complete their shifts and stick to their schedules when there in the office but for anything kind of outside of that." (Interviewee 8)</p>	
		Fusing together	1	<p>"yes sometimes there in a twin like co-workers become friends or like we might have work events during the evening they don't really feel necessarily like work events but more like a fun event with friends. "</p>	
		Enough Days off	2	(Interviewee 7)	
		Pressure to meet expectations	2		
		Good WLB in Europe	1		
	b) Actions	Positive	6		
		Negative	6		
		Managing Free Time = difficult	5		<p>(Ehm), it has been difficult to be honest. Usually the time when I spent time with my friends or family was on the weekends but even though we have off on the weekends I used to work a few days on the weekends but so when I saw my friends was basically on the weekend or late in the evening.</p>

		Managing Free Time = easy	5				Yeah, definitely. So, I prefer to start early because I'm more like a morning person (eh) but typically I leave quite early as well (eh) between 4 and 5, quarter to 5 pm typically. So, my evening is quite long still I'd say.
		Sports	5				(Eh) and yeah so when I finish early I mean a quarter to 5 I still have plenty of time to do sports or any other activities.
		Weekly Planner	1				
		Time Management	5				
		Energy Management	1				
		YOU are in charge of your WLB	1				"(Ehm) I think personally at the end of the day there is definitely things that company can do to encourage a good Work-Life Balance but at the end of the day it's up to the employees up to us to every individual to make sure that you know we're happy and that our mental health is ok and that we find a balance between the two. And if we do find ourselves imbalanced for too long and if we do find ourselves in being really unhappy than it's up to us you know to make changes accordingly. (Ehm) so, I definitely realize that you know I'm in charge of that and that's why I've you know really focused especially since Corona on making sure that I leave early and that I just try to work more efficiently to work more in working hours." (Interviewee 7)
		Support each other	1				
	c) Coping with Stress/Pre	Positive	10				
		Negative	4				
		Work Less	1				(Ehm) how do I cope I mean I try to since corona started I try to work less, which worked out good.
		Sleep	2				Usually I just try to get enough sleep. I think the best thing is sleep I make sure I sleep a lot and enough.
		Go for Walks	1				I try to go for a short walk
		Talk to Family	1				talk to my family before I go to bed
		Eat healthy	2			try to eat healthy	Yeah so, I make sure I eat healthy, I eat a lot of vegetables, I eat a lot of fruits.

		Emotions Home/Work	1	"It was tough because you know we are humans and it's connected you know like your private life and your work life and your emotions and you're not just a robot. So, you bring your private emotions into work and your work emotions into your private life. So, when it's tough at work it's it can also be tough at home." (Interviewee 7)		
		Understanding - it's part of job	1	"No, I suppose just I don't know it's supposed to be just the understanding that it's part of the job and it's always going to happen. So, I think it's just the acceptance that is part of human nature that you're going to experience those challenges and then being confident within the processes of the company." (Interviewee 8)		
		Not stressed often	1			
		Travel	1			
		Stress can be personal	1			
		Find tribe for energy	1	"(Ehm), I think as well it's really important, so say for instance when you move into management kind of your job is very much to support (ehm) and it takes a lot of energy to support a team. So, what I learned when I got into management was like that I needed my own kind of tribe to support me as well and to give me energy. Because I was giving so much energy to my team that I wasn't getting any energy back and I was becoming very, very drained." (Interviewee 10)		
		Do Sports	4			I make sure I do my sports.

d) Programs/Policies/Benefits	Positive	9			
	Negative	4			
	Maternity/Paternity Leave	2		They pay paternity/maternity leave.	
	Flexible Working Hours	4		They also have the flexible working hours.	
	Sports Courses	2		They also offer sports courses	
	Finacial Support	4		I think that you can also get financial support from LinkedIn for elderly care and that so they offer pretty lots of stuff in this kind of area.	I know there is support financially I believe I don't know the details because yeah I don't have children so I've never looked into this (eh) but I know we do support it.
	Half Day Work	1		Part-time, let me think if I know somebody but yeah I know a friend of mine she has a mum and she's allowed to work just half day, but she's in a more senior position	

						(Eh) then you have the wellness program right per month that they financially support (eh) anything. This can be a ski pass, this can be a spar, this can be a massage, this can be a gym, this can be anything.
		Wellness Days	5			They have like these days called "In-Days" where you can have the topic Wellness
		Mental Health Events	4			They have lots of mental health events. Like they have, but the problem is for me in my position I don't have the time to go and see those events.
		Voluntary Days	1			(Eh) we have 7 days a year that we can take in total for holidays that became useful for voluntary activities. So, you can do anything you're passionate about. You can take 7 days off for free and you can usually do 7 days of VTO (voluntary time off) as we call it. (Eh) so this can be, you can go and clean beaches, you can go to a primary school and help them for a week and you can do anything what you want to do.
		Meditation Room	1			(Eh) yeah we have a meditation room in the office. Every office has a meditation room where you can go to, if you want to get zen again you know retreat from all the business basically. (Eh) I've never had to use it but I know it's there.
		Enough Holidays	2			(Eh) there's I mean you get enough holidays, they're also quite flexible with holidays (eh) you've got the voluntary time off. So, it's basically extra holidays you get (eh).
		Working from Home (pre-covid)	2			And we are at salesforce a big fan of working from home even pre covid. Every week I was at least 1 day working from home. (Eh) I think that's a big thing also in terms of wellness in terms of wellbeing especially for parents.

				"(Eh) another thing is if they expect us to stay home until the end of the year at least (ehm) they should also expect us to be able to work more remotely from other countries. I know due to tax reasons it's a little bit limited but I believe there is a way to work around it because we find ourselves as we always say in unprecedented times. And I think if you're really want to support the mental health and the talent you have that is just something you need to start with. Because all these benefits that we use to have are gone now right."	
	Work from everywhere	1	(Interviewee 7)		
	Nothing the company can do	2			
	Shorter Working Week	1			
				"Maybe just one comment is that sometimes some companies think yeah we are taking care of our employee because we have a I don't know a health program and sometimes this is a bit kind of false argument just this is much more an umbrella "ah we are doing something". " (Interviewee 4)	
	False impression of companies	1			
f) Future	Positive	9			
	Negative	3			
	Stop Flexible Working Hours	1			Like for the future, I hope that they will stop doing the flexible working time, working hours it never pays off for the people working their ass off because if you have flexible hours you usually stay longer because you feel like you haven't done enough and there's no real hours where you can say ok I'm off now so I wouldn't like to have the flexible hours anymore

				What is nice is like if you're allowed to work from home some days a week, this is nice if it's not like all the time like now with corona. (Ehm) working from home can be like destressing as well.	To work from home
	Work from Home	7			
	Flexibility	3			Maybe that companies have to be flexible, when people can work, where they can work from. At salesforce they are quite good at this already. So, I think this important. So, that we get rid of the 9-5 working culture or 9-6 and we make it more flexible.
	Work from anywhere	3			I think this will improve a lot and also that you can work from anywhere. I think that will improve a lot,

		Employees = Assets	1	"Understand that the employees are the asset. Treating them as assets. Assets is what the company make it work." (Interviewee 3)	
		Adapt to new talents	1	"And I know that there is some company that may die. Irrespectively of their business health, of the good products that they have but the new talents (ehm) are looking for something different from just the pure profit or financial pressure every month or to have a boss that is to directive to intrusive etc." (Interviewee 4)	
		Hire people from everywhere - remote workers	2	"So, I think tech companies really need to look at (ehm) they really need to look at hiring more remote workers. And people who are (eh) in different countries because there is a wealth of talent across Europe And (ehm) people maybe don't want to move to Ireland because it rains and it's windy and it's really expensive you know. So, I think that's definitely something we could tap into." (Interviewee 10)	
		Increase Annual Leave	1		
		Shorten Working Week	1		
		More External Meetings	1	"Definitely having more external meetings. So, like meeting your teams more in the park and you know once a week or every two weeks that we actually meet together because I do find it's very, it is a different way of managing when you are virtual I suppose as when you are face to face." (Interviewee 10)	

Tech Company	a) Why Tech? (Reasons)	Positive	10			
		Negative	1			
		Recommendation	2		(Ehm) I decided to work in this sector when I got referred by a friend. She was, she is quite happy with the work and it sounded good to me.	
		Coincidence	5			

		Equity	1			(Ehm) and equality is super to us (ehm) you really see that in everything we have: different project groups where we support minorities, (eh) we have many different ways to support equality
		Disorganized	1			
		Manager	3			
		Common Language	1			
		Respect	1			
		Culture Support	1			
		Groups	1			
		Mental Health	1	"Talking about mental health is not tabu in LinkedIn where is in other companies it is. You know, people say it's not tabu but if you tell people: I have anxiety or I'm feeling depressed or you know I have a lot going on. Sometimes they would look at you more negatively. They won't mean to but sometimes it can be more biased towards you. Whereas in LinkedIn people are a lot more open about talking about what they're going through which is quite nice and refreshing." (Interviewee 10)		

3) Employee Motivation	a) Career Progression/Promotion	Positive	5			
		Negative	4			
		Easy	4			(Eh), I would say so yes.
		Not easy	3		So, usually it's easy but I say in my case it's not.	
		Reach Targets/Conditions	5		Well, I'd say in sales if you reach your targets you're almost automatically (ehm) promoted into another position or next level, next step or next role position. But if you do not meet your targets it's not easy. I think that with (ehm) progressing into a next role, there's always condition which you have to meet and if you don't it's not easy	
		Depends on Manager/Team	2		And I'd say it depends on the teams, the managers.	

						I don't know about other companies but at salesforce it's quite straight forward it's a clear path (eh) so yes, I'd say salesforce is quite well outlined, well described so yes it's quite clear.
		Clear Path/Good System	3			
		No change of contract	1			
		Depending on Situation	1			
		Personal skills	2			
		Experience	1			
	b) Benefits	Positive	9			
		Negative	4			
		Free Food/Snacks	6		We've got benefits in terms of we got free food. There's a barista at the top	Eh) so, breakfast we do get offered.
		Gym	5		We have a gym.	
		Option to Perk Up	6		(Ehm) you can perk up staff so we have a lot of benefits.	(Ehm) we have €100 a month on wellness (eh) that we can claim. So, I always expense my gym membership.
		Applied because of benefits	1		We have our jobs but (ehm) yes I did apply because of the benefits, because I knew that they were great.	
		Education	3			(Ehm) we have education benefits. So, we have €5000 a year that we can spend on education. So, this can be from any kind of course that you want from language courses to courses (eh) at universities to anything you want to do (eh) then we have a bunch more.
		Health Insurance	5			Also, health insurance partly covered, (eh) dentist insurance that partly cover, (eh) I think those are the main things, the most important things. They have small things as well for example they pay for your glasses. I needed new glasses (eh) last month and salesforce paid for them (eh) what else is there (eh) I think those are the main things.
		No benefits offered	1			
		Not paying in time	1			
		No Health Insurance	2			
		Pension Plan	1			
		Ticket für Food (Discounts)	2			

4) Technology	Digitalization	Positive	7			
		Negative	6			
		24/7 accesible -> yes	6		I felt like this.	(Ehm) that's true. I agree to the statement.
		24/7 accesible -> no	3			
		Work Laptop/Phone	7		I have a laptop from work and at work I have a phone where you can reach me, but right now I have a laptop where you can reach me under this exact same number.	Because (eh) yeah I mean I'm calling from my phone now I'm working outside so that means I'm already accessible and I have my phone it's a work phone so yeah
		Switch off after work	4		Now I just switch off my laptop after I finished work. So, it makes you feel like that but you have to think (sich einen Strich ziehen) = let's go ahead.	
		Connected 24/7	4		But yeah digitalisation it leads you in the way that you're connected all the time.	in theory I'm accessible 24/7

		Requires Discipline	2			So, maybe it requires more discipline right. (Ehm) discipline is more important to make sure to maintain your balance.
		PTO = Switch off	2			And (ehm) if I go on a holiday I always turn off my e-mail and turn off the hangouts which is like an internal chat program but people can reach out to me. That's what I always do when I go on holidays.
		Check e-mails on phone	2			
		Respect - Human to Human	2			
		Especially in Homeoffice	2			
		Digitalization positive&negative	2			
		Don't shut off phone	1			
		Exhausting and challenging mentally	1			
		YOU are in charge	1			

Tech Company	a) Why Tech? (Reasons)				
	Positive	10			
	Negative	1			
	Recommendation	2			
	Coincidence	5			
	Dublin = Tech City	2	"I think in Dublin, it's a great opportunity to start working at a Tech Company because (ehm) most of the international companies are here in Dublin." (Interviewee 3)		
			"And (eh) I knew, I mean tech is your future right, tech is (eh) the world is, (eh) almost all companies are becoming tech. Before I joined salesforce I was working at adidas (eh) a sports company and there were also slowly moving, becoming a tech company. So even you weren't in a tech company before in the future all companies will be tech companies." (Interviewee 2) "Just having the opportunity of more of a future. I think that is what encouraged me to work in tech. I mean look at COVID right now a lot of industries are heavily, negatively impacted by it. And where is tech I'd say because it's so technology advantaged organization it's definitely more profiting from it." (Interviewee 7)		And (eh) I knew, I mean tech is your future right, tech is (eh) the world is, (eh) almost all companies are becoming tech. Before I joined salesforce I was working at adidas (eh) a sports company and there were also slowly moving, becoming a tech company. So even you weren't in a tech company before in the future all companies will be tech companies.
	Future	2			
	Interesting/Exiting	2		sounded good to me	in my opinion the industry to be in and it's really exiting , it's really fast-paced and it's really interesting .

			"You know, an industry that is up and coming and there is so many like changes and it's relevant, it's important and it's growing." (Interviewee 7)	In my opinion the industry to be in and it's really exiting, it's really fast-paced and it's really interesting.
		Fast-Changing	3	
		Opportunities for foreigners	3	
		International Experience	2	
		Previous Work Experience	2	
		Benefits	1	
		Career Change	2	
		Personal Interest	2	
		Challenge	1	
		Money	1	
b) Work Culture		Positive	9	
		Negative	2	
				The culture in LinkedIn is actually good. (Ehm) yeah but the culture in general is great we've got a lot of diversity (ehm) it says members first and it feels like it is but for me it's just I like the culture
		Great/Good	5	The culture is really nice.
		Company Events	4	(Eh) we also have events,we have more formal events, more informal events.

		Team/Office Events	5	They do have a lot of afterwork events in the teams but they're not all employees involved it's like it depends on the team your in but usually you have (ehm) Fridays where you meet with the team for a drink in the pub (ehm) or you have a team night out planned where you could do something like drink and draw or whatever.	(Eh) we have team events, often go for drinks, (eh) we have breakfast at the company, (eh) we have lunch, we don't really have lunch provided (eh) but we always have it together with the team.
		Companies Values	4		But we have 4 values in salesforce: trust, customer success, innovation and equality. That are 4 main values and everything that we do is around those values.
		Diversity	2	We've got a lot of diversity.	
		Colleagues become friends/family	2		Your colleagues really become your friends, so that's really nice.
		Equity	1		(Ehm) and equality is super to us (ehm) you really see that in everything we have: different project groups where we support minorities, (eh) we have many different ways to support equality
		Disorganized	1		
		Manager	3		
		Common Language	1		
		Respect	1		
		Culture Support	1		
		Groups	1		
		Mental Health	1	"Talking about mental health is not tabu in LinkedIn where is in other companies it is. You know, people say it's not tabu but if you tell people: I have anxiety or I'm feeling depressed or you know I have a lot going on. Sometimes they would look at you more negatively. They won't mean to but sometimes it can be more biased towards you. Whereas in LinkedIn people are a lot more open about talking about what they're going through which is quite nice and refreshing. " (Interviewee 10)	

		Meetings	3	You got lots of weekly one to ones with your manager where you can work on action plans.	
					But for example, a small example right. I recently changed houses in Dublin. So, I told my manager that I am going to be quite busy that week because I was moving out, I was selling some items and I was moving into the new house and (eh) my manager was very understandable. He said finding a new house should be my main priority (eh) he understand that this causes stress and not to worry about the job and work (eh) make sure your move goes smooth and everything goes well and then it will be fine. That's just an example how they support us and how they support families if something comes up.
		Understanding/Caring	2		
		Support from friends/partner/family	2		
		Survey	1		
		Company support	3		
		WLB	1		
		Manager has more pressure	1		
		Depending on manager	1		
		Fake	1		
		Support in Emergency Cases	1		
		Support each other	2		
		Trust	3		
		Support for Managers could be better	1		

6) Corona Pandemic	Change in Life	Positive	9			
		Negative	4			
		Work from other country	3	I'm allowed to work from Germany. (Ehm), right now I'm working from home from Germany.	And I'm in Germany at the moment but we just got here. So, I stayed in Dublin for 4 months and I just went to Germany. A lot of people are working from everywhere. We have managers who are Irish who are working from France. (Eh) we have a lot of people who travelled to other countries (eh) because they prefer to stay there and work from there.	
		Office closed till end of 2020	1	Our office is it's not sure but it's they told me it's closed till the end of 2020.		
No physical contact with colleagues	2	So, it changed in terms of I haven't seen my colleagues since March.				
Video Calls	1	Everything is via VC. they offer all of the parties on VC				

	Meetings	3		We stick to our daily meetings, we have our one to ones with the manager and the colleagues.	
	Finish Work Earlier	2		The thing what changed is that I stopped work earlier because I noticed that everyone around me stopped work at 6,7 or 5. I work definitely less hours.	
	WLB	1		It changed for me in terms of Work-Life Balance for me because there was a little like (ehm), I don't feel that much connected anymore because I work for myself at my home and it's not like everyone around me is hustling and doing.	

	Less Stressful	4		They're stuff so it feels like a little less stressful and (ehm) what else changed (ehm) I mean you don't feel connected as connected as before with your colleagues than before because you met everybody in the kitchen or you met everybody for breakfast and (ehm) I'd say that especially for us SD's when you still have your target on it's still stressing you because you feel you're by yourself now.	
	Homeoffice	10		yes	(Eh) the main thing obviously instead of 1 day working from home is now all the time now it's 5 days.
	Financial Support -> Proper Set Up	2			(Eh) so, I needed a proper setup in my apartment where I could easily work from home. So, we also got financial support for this. So, I bought a desk, I bought a monitor and I got a keyboard already to properly work from home and a chair as well.

					(Ehm) what else what are the main things that have changed (ehm) work is still the same I must say to pre covid. It haven't changed too much. (Eh) you have different kind of requests coming from customers. I mean the amount of work is roughly the same
	Work = same	3			
	Support from company	2			But for me so far I've been quite lucky in this and salesforce has supported me well and I haven't have to suffer too much.
	No Commute	1			
	Work = disorganized	1			
	Tired of staying home	1			
	Happy to work from home	4			
	No Travel	1			
	Used to work from home	1			
	Teamwork	1			
	Work remotely -> working	1			
	Future -> less travel	1			
	Future -> Less physical contact	1			
	Hard to work from home	4			
	Flexibility	1			
	Difficult time	1			
	Missing the office	3			
	Less Distraction	2			
	Positive Impact	1			
	Change of Working Environment	1			
	Organization	2			
	Challenging for new people	1			
	Getting Lazy -> Try workout	1			